







LASSIE AND LADDIE

A STORY FOR LITTLE LADS AND LASSIES

BY

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Author of "Grandma's Attic Treasures," "Dan," "My Margaret," etc.



IN THE GARDEN. *Page 57*

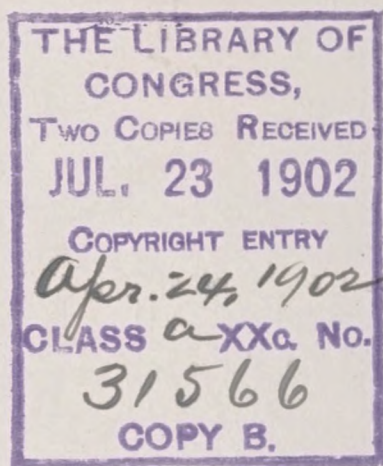
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LASSIE AND LADDIE

CHAPTER I

THE BIRTHDAY

IT was a very beautiful day in August. The clock in the village church steeple had just chimed out the half-hour after three, when a dear little blue-eyed girl came out upon the porch of a pretty cottage and stood there a moment as though listening for some expected sound, while the breezes blew her golden hair about her sweet, sunny little face. She wore a dainty blue cambric dress trimmed with white. Her broad-brimmed shade hat hung by its ribbons from her arm (it was

very seldom found upon her head), and a very pretty picture she made, this dear little girl of whom I am going to write.

In each rosy cheek a little dimple nestled, and now and then a tiny one peeped out of the "prettiest little chin in the world"—at least that is what a certain mamma used to call it.

Lassie stood on the porch a moment, and then, with a hop, skip, and jump, she reached the gate which opened out upon the roadway, and in a trice had perched herself on the broad, flat top of one of the gate-posts.

Seated there, she pulled her hat from her shoulders and, swinging it around by the ribbons, began to sing in a happy little voice, keeping time also by kicking her small heels against the post with as much energy as her good spirits prompted. The song was quite original with little Lassie, and the words were rather monotonous, but they expressed Lassie's state of com-

plete happiness, and there was nobody at hand to criticise.

To be sure, a dear, loving mamma, busy in an upstairs room of the cottage, heard the little voice, and thought it the sweetest music she could hear ; and the nice old darkey, Tom, who had been hired to split wood and was busily at work in the woodshed at that moment, also heard the little shrill tones which rang so cheerily out on the air, and his criticism was also a kindly one, for he “reckoned little Miss was mighty happy on dat birfdays o’ hern, bress her teenty hairt !”

So Lassie sang on, and meanwhile the beautiful sky overhead was sending its sunbeams down to frolic and dance over the fields and meadows and make everything as golden and bright and happy as could be.

Merry little butterflies chased each other about amongst the daisies and the fragrant tangles along the roadside, and

happy birds flew here and there in the tree-tops and warbled out the joyousness of their own glad little hearts, just as Lassie was doing on top of her gate-post.

Never, never had Lassie, so she said to herself, seen such a “perfectly be-*yew*-tiful day!” Never had the sun shone just in that goldenly way, and she was certain she had never felt such soft little breezes blowing on her nor smelled such sweet, lovely smells in the air before *this special* day! She looked over at the hills beyond the fields and the woods, and was sure as could be that she had never seen those dear little cloud-shadows playing tag up and down the hillsides as she saw them *to-day*, and, in fact, she believed this *extra* beautiful day of sunbeams and sweet smells and lovely sounds and happy sights had been made on purpose for her *birth-day*.

Well, now, why was it that little Lassie (whose real name, I will tell you here,

was Katherine Kearney) was so wonderfully happy on this particular afternoon, and seemed to see everything about her in a way somewhat different from usual? This is why.

At seven o'clock in the morning of that day, our little girl had ceased to be "*going on seven*," and had actually reached the full figure, and was a full-fledged seven-year-old at last.

At breakfast time Mamma had whispered a little news in her ear (which until then had been a secret plan of Mamma's very own), and Lassie had danced up and down with delight, and had declared over and over that what Mamma had told her was coming as a *birthday present* was the *bestest*, the loveliest, and most welcome thing that could have been given her.

It was coming on the stage which journeyed to and fro between the large hotel of the village and the railroad station, and

it would be due at the Kearney cottage about four o'clock.

No wonder Lassie had been excited all day, up to this particular time, and was now, with her dear little heart overflowing with joy, keeping a sharp lookout for the coming of that stage, and helping the time to pass more quickly by *singing* it away so merrily. You may be wondering what that birthday present was to be, no doubt, but you will find that out in the next chapter.

“Oh, I am so *glad!* Oh, I am so *glad!* My dearest present is *coming!*” sang Lassie, her little heels pounding the gate-post, and her clear, piping tones rising high and higher in the air.

A little colony of black ants which were building their houses at the foot of the post were so scared at the shaking about their foundations that they scurried away out of sight, and the birdies on the bough of the old elm tree above Lassie's head

stopped their own concert to listen to the music which floated up to their wee little ears.

“Oh, I am so *glad*! Oh, I am so —”
Hark! the sound of wheels! Lassie’s voice was hushed and she leaned forward to listen.

Yes, oh, yes, she surely heard the sound of wheels and the beating of horses’ hoofs upon the road!





CHAPTER II

THE PRESENT ON ITS WAY

HE sat in the upper corner of the rickety old stage, which bounced and rumbled over the uneven highway en route from the station to the village beyond. His name was "Laddie"—though he had been christened James Lee. But "*Laddie* Lee" had seemed to the dear old Scotch nurse (who had loved him "like he was her ain bairnie") to be the better name for the bonny boy-baby she had been called to care for, and "Laddie" he was called to this day, by Papa, Mamma, and all who knew and loved him.

He wore a brown linen suit of short jacket and knickerbockers, with a broad

white collar turned back from his smooth throat, and a Scotch plaid tie under his chin. A little Scotch cap rested lightly on his brown curly head, and a pair of dark eyes, shaded by long dark lashes, were glancing eagerly through the open windows of the coach from one side of the road to the other and along the distance of dusty travel before him.

The few other passengers in the coach, noticing his clear skin and oval-shaped face, the pretty, innocent mouth with its sweet expression, and the general attractiveness of the little fellow, were calling him in their hearts “a bonny boy,” as indeed he was. And this, my dear little readers, was the “birthday present” for which Lassie on the gate-post had so long been keeping watch, and was still waiting and singing for,—as not yet had the rumble of the stage wheels reached her ears.

Laddie thought it a very long time

indeed since his father had put him in charge of the train conductor that morning, and asked that he should be safely turned over to the driver of the Whitford stage to be deposited finally at the Kearney cottage, where a dear auntie and little cousin were awaiting him. He was getting very tired, and he considered it full time the long, "bumpity" ride was finished. His view from the end window, next to which he was sitting, was constantly interrupted by the big, stout-booted leg which belonged to the big, stout driver, and which was constantly hanging down from the box seat, and swinging back and forth before Laddie's eyes. But he could bear *that* far better than he could endure to see the driver's long whip continually flicking and swishing over the backs and sides of the tired old bony nags, as they tried to get a gait somewhat faster than their ability allowed. He hated to see anything cruel, and Lad-

die thought it very cruel indeed for a man to be always whipping his horses.

So at last he turned his eyes away, and looked at the view from the opposite window, shifting himself with a tired little sigh in his seat. A good-natured old farmer sitting beside him laid a kind, brawny hand on Laddie's knee, and said, "Well, sonny, you're gittin' 'bout as tired's *I* be, ain't ye?"

Laddie's cheeks dimpled. "I don't know how tired you are, sir, so maybe I'm *tireder* 'n you," he replied, for Laddie was a sociable little fellow and always ready with replies to questions. The farmer laughed, and gave Laddie's little knee rather a too energetic pat.

"Wal', *I'm* tired enough to want to git home to my farm mighty quick," said he, "an' that's about your case, I reckon. Where ye bound, sonny?"

"I'm going to visit my Auntie and my cousin Lassie, sir," replied the little boy,

and then he went on to explain that as his Auntie had only been living in Whitford a year, this was his first visit to the village, and he did n't know where the cottage was, but he hoped the driver would get there soon, 'cause he was sure Lassie would be waiting and waiting for him.

"An' what may your name be, sonny?" continued the farmer.

"My name is 'Laddie' mostly, but when I'm not a good boy my Mamma and Papa say 'James Lee' to me, in a very sober voice."

The passengers laughed at Laddie's frank little speech, and the farmer gave him another vigorous pat, which made Laddie move a little away from the strong hand, though it was only kind in its intentions, you know.

"So your cousin is, 'Lassie,' and you are 'Laddie,'" laughed the talkative old farmer. "That's a pretty pair o' names, surely."

“ Well, you see, Auntie lived next door to my Mamma, and Lassie came to live on this earth one week after *I* came,—I know all 'bout it, 'cause Mamma 's told me, you see,—and when they called me '*Laddie*,' they called my little girl-cousin '*Lassie*'—'cause we came to our mammas so near together, and we've always played together, and loved each other, same as if we were right in one family. Oh, I did miss Lassie so, when she and Auntie moved away and came here! *Her real* name is Katherine Kearney,” he added, “and when *she's* naughty, I s'pose her mamma says '*Kath'rine*' to her in a sober way, same as mine does.”

A sweet-faced lady, dressed in mourning, sat on the opposite side of the coach, and she had been watching and smiling at Laddie during his conversation with the man. But her smile had been partly a sad one, and if any one had looked closely at her, the tears in her soft gray

eyes would have told that some sad memory was in her heart.

Presently she beckoned to Laddie, and in an instant he was at her side.

She was sitting apart from the few other passengers in the coach, so that her talk with the little boy was not wholly audible to others. She took his small hand in her own, as she said, "Laddie dear, once I had a little son about your age—how old are you, dear?"

"I was seven a week ago—and Lassie, *she's* seven *to-day*—just this very day; and I'm her birthday present, you see. Oh, it's going to be great fun for us!"

His brown eyes sparkled, and his dimples came and went, as he stood before the lady and told her how his Auntie had sent for him to come as a "birthday present," which would please Lassie more than anything her mother could give her in the way of toys and other gifts.

And the lady smiled in sympathy with

his joy and kept his little plump hand in hers, as he chattered on.

Then he remembered her first remark, and asked her where her little boy was then.

Her smile became a sad one again, as she explained that her son had been taken ill, and that God had called his dear young soul to dwell in heaven with the angels, just as he was entering upon his eighth year. "He had had his birthday and such a merry one," continued the lady, "and I suffered a great deal when I realized that I never could hear his gay little voice again. But you look very like him, Laddie," added she, as she patted the little hand she held, "for you have the same brown in your eyes, and the same brown in your curly hair, and that wee dimple in your chin is so like my boy's that if there weren't so many here to see me, I believe I would kiss you there just as I used to kiss him."

Laddie laughed. "*I* wouldn't mind," said he, "cause I like you!"

"Well then, you'll kiss me for good-bye, won't you, when you leave the stage?" she asked, and Laddie agreed.

"*I* know who looked like me!" said Laddie, "and that's *Uncle Jamie*! Did your little boy look like *him*?"

"I could answer your question better if I were to meet your Uncle, dear. Will you tell me about him?"

"Why, yes, ma'am; he's Lassie's papa," explained Laddie, "and Mamma named me for him; but *you* can't ever see him, neither can anybody in the world, any more, for once he was very sick, and the doctor tried and tried and *could n't* make him well. So he went to live in heaven, you know, and then Auntie moved here, and we all miss him very much. Please, ma'am, will you tell me where you live? I think, if you won't mind, I can go and see you, and take Lassie."

“That will please me very much, Laddie. You walk a little distance beyond the post-office till you see a gray cottage set back from the road, and a lawn before it, where a fountain is playing. I shall be very glad to see you, and my name is Mrs. Spencer.”

“Thank you,” said Laddie; “we’ll be sure to find you, ma’am, and I’m glad I look like your little boy. I guess maybe he’n my Uncle Jamie know that even if they are n’t living here any more we keep on *loving* ’em just the same, and they love us, too, don’t you think so?”

“I think *you* are a dear little fellow!” she replied, smiling at his earnest face. Just then—“Hi, there, you small passenger, yonder’s the Kearney cottage! Git ready to hop lively when I call whoa!” called the driver through the window.

It was at this time that Lassie, you remember, was pricking up her little ears at the sound of the rumble of wheels and of

hoof-beats, and as the stage turned the corner of the road and came into sight, she was endeavoring to slide down from the post, and calling frantically to mamma to come quick, for her little skirt had caught on a nail, and she was neither on the post nor on the ground, but hanging awkwardly between, and was released from that condition just as the old stage came bouncing along to stop short before the gate.





THE "BIRTHDAY PRESENT" COMES.



CHAPTER III

THE ARRIVAL

LADDIE'S head was out the window of the coach even before it stopped, and his clear voice was ringing out, "Lassie! Lassie! I see you! here I am, Lassie!" as the little girl was being released from the nail in the gate-post. Then, as at last she was free to run out upon the road and to the stage door, Laddie jumped out and they flew into each other's arms with a hug and a shout which rang far and wide. But suddenly Laddie remembered his promise to his new acquaintance, who was watching him wistfully, but had no thought of reminding him of her previous request. He turned and stood again upon the steps

of the coach, and leaned forward to the lady as she sat beside the door.

“My gladness nearly made me forget my promise,” he said, “but I’m glad I remembered right away, ’cause I’m glad to kiss you, I like you so very much.” His soft little lips touched hers, and then with a “good-bye” to the other passengers, he hopped off the steps, just as the driver flourished his whip and started the tired horses on the rest of their journey. “Good-bye, sonny!” called the old farmer, putting his head out the window and waving his red cotton handkerchief. “Good-bye! I’ll see ye agin somehow, I reckon; good-bye to ye!”

Meantime the little cousins, arms around each other and faces beaming like the sunbeams all about them, were skipping up the path between the gate and the cottage porch, where Auntie stood with outstretched arms to welcome the small visitor, while Lassie cried: “O Laddie,

Laddie Lee! I'm so glad! You're the very bestest and very loveliest present in the world!" They hugged each other again and danced around the porch and into the hall, where the tidy maid-of-all-work was waiting to carry Laddie's little dress-suit case—all his very own, and marked with his name in good plain letters—up-stairs to the pretty, small room Mamma had prepared for him.

Up the stairs scampered Lassie and Laddie, while Mamma followed with a glass of milk and a sandwich for the little traveller, who would be sure to want something, even though, as she knew, he had had a substantial luncheon on the train, according to papa's instructions to the conductor. And while he was eating his sandwich and drinking his milk, he did as much talking, in answer to Lassie's chattering tongue, as a boy conveniently could with his small mouth full of bread and chicken.

He told about his car-journey, the things he had seen and got tired of seeing, and of how he had been so thirsty that he went to the drinking-tank, and, after drinking, had forgotten to turn the faucet back, and the water had overflowed the tray and made a big puddle on the car floor, and the porter had been so furious that he yelled at him before all the people, and a gentleman had told the porter to be silent, and a kind lady had told him (Laddie) not to cry, "'cause he had been so 'shamed he almost did cry"; and of how the conductor had by and by sent him a lot of nice lunch, and he ate all he could and threw the rest out the window to some nice little dogs on a street the train was passing; and how pretty soon he fell asleep, and pretty soon after that the conductor told him there was the stage, and took him out of the car and told the big driver on the stage to leave him at Mis' Kearney's, and—and—

here he was! And then he remembered he had n't told about the stage-ride. So he drank some more milk, took the last bite of his sandwich, as he sat on the edge of his little bed, swinging his black-stockinged legs back and forth and hurrying to swallow the end of his sandwich, and again began his story. He told how the stage bumped and how he wanted to be a man, so 's he could *beat* the big driver, who kept whipping his horses; and he told about the nice old brown farmer who kept patting him on his knee so hard that it hurt, and he wished the man would n't do it, but he did n't think it would be polite to tell him so; he told about the sweet lady — oh, she was such a *pretty* lady! — who talked to him so gently and told him he looked like her dear little boy who had died. He told his Auntie he wished he could see that sweet lady again, 'cause he almost *loved* her, she was so sweet and had such a lot of music in her voice. Oh!

it was *such* a different kind of voice from the old farmer's, and he liked it better; though the farmer had a lot of *laugh* in his voice that made him quite nice to talk to. And finally he put down his plate and his glass and, running over to Auntie, threw his little arms about her and said he was so glad to be with her and Lassie, and he had promised Mamma *solermy*—oh! very *solermy*, indeed — that he would be a good boy and mind every word she said.

Then Auntie kissed him all over again and gave him a squeeze, and left him to chatter all he wanted to with Lassie, while she went down-stairs to attend to some duties.

What a cozy little cottage it was that Lassie and Mamma were entertaining their small visitor in! Once Mrs. Kearney, when Lassie's papa was living, had been mistress of a fine large house; but when the dear papa died, there had been troubles

in many ways, and not so much money, you see, as before, and so the mother and her little daughter had found it pleasanter to come to this dear little cottage home; and here they had every comfort, and all Mamma's pretty pictures and dainty things about the rooms, and, best of all, the beautiful "*outdoor* pictures" of hills and meadows and trees and sunshine and pretty cloud-shadows, and *all* the lovely out-of-door scenes which people who live in the country can enjoy so freely. Lassie thought her little home the dearest place in the world, and now that she had her Laddie with her again, no little girl on earth was happier than she.

Well, suddenly Laddie remembered that he had promised his Mamma not only to be a good boy, but to write her a postal card as soon as he could, so that she might know by the next day that he had arrived safely at his Auntie's home. Hand in hand they went down the stairs and

told Auntie about it, and she provided him with the card and pen and ink.

Now both Laddie and Lassie had been to kindergarten before Lassie left the city, and had learned to write as well as could be expected of such little people, and they could read readily as well, and in fact they were quite as clever (and that means considerable) as any little up-to-date people of seven years ought to be.

So Laddie sat at his Auntie's desk, and began to write, his little red tongue peeping out and in from his lips — after a fashion some small people have when writing, you know — and his pen moving slowly and carefully over the card as he formed his rounded letters and composed his lines, while auntie sat by and helped him spell every word correctly.

When he had finished, he handed the card to her and this is what she read.

“DEAR MAMMA : I 've come, and I 'm glad, and it 's nice to be with Auntie and

Lassie. I love them, but I love you and Papa best, 'cause I ought to. The wind smells sweet here. I 'm being good so I 'm being glad. Good-bye, from your
“LADDIE.”

“That is very nicely written, Laddie,” said his Auntie; “and now if you and Lassie will take this to the post-office it will go to New York in the evening train and Mamma will have it in the morning. It is only half-past four now and you 'll have a nice walk before supper-time.”





CHAPTER IV

THE WALK TO THE POST-OFFICE

SO they started off merrily, skipping along the road, and talking fast as their little tongues could wag. Laddie was just overflowing with joy and the sense of unusual freedom which the sight of the green fields and the beauty of the entire landscape gave him.

“Oh, how nice it is!” he exclaimed, “and how jolly it smells! I wish I had a bigger nose so ’s I could get more nice smells in it.” He wrinkled his nose as he spoke and “sniffed” loudly.

“That is n’t the way to get smells inside, if you want a lot of ’em,” cried Lassie. “You must do like this, see? Just

like this." And she opened her mouth wide as possible, and drew in a long deep breath of sweet air.

"How do you know that's the right way?" asked Laddie. "*I* never saw any one do like that."

"Well, anyway, mouths are bigger'n noses, and more sweet smells can get inside of you so than just through little holes in the nose, you see."

Laddie decided that she was right about it—so *his* mouth stretched itself as far apart as its size would permit, and down into his throat went the "sweet smells" he craved.

"There! now I feel sweet and nice inside of me," he said. "And I tell you what, Lassie, I wish *I* lived in a place like this. It's more fun going to country post-offices than just to a lamp-post, 'n sticking letters in a slit in a box, you see, and I like walking on dirt better'n hard stones, and I like seeing green things

about on each side of me, lots and lots better than *houses* all the time."

"I guess maybe you feel full, way up to your top, with a happy feeling, same as I do," said Lassie. "*My* feeling began this morning when Mamma told me 'bout your coming as my birthday present, and when it was time for me to sit on the gate-post and watch out for the stage, I nearly burst right in two with my gladness."

"I felt something like that, when Mamma told me Auntie had sent for me, and when Papa put me on the train, why, I was so glad I was coming to see *you*, that I forgot to be homesick, and I s'pose little boys *ought* to be homesick when they 're leaving their papas and mammas, don't you? But, truly and honestly, I 'm not homesick even yet, Lassie, and—and I would n't be for the world! I guess not!"

He drew nearer Lassie, and put his arm over her shoulder as they walked along.

Presently Lassie said: "Birthdays are such beautiful times, are n't they, Laddie?"

"Well, I guess they are," he answered. "*You* must be *my* birthday present next time. I don't see why Mamma did n't think of this kind of plan same as Auntie did. *I* only had a big cake with white shiny stuff on top, and seven big red roses all around it with some green vines, and some toys, and picture books, and—O, Lassie Kearney, the dress-suit case that Auntie sent me—*you* and Auntie together—was the bestest and the dearest of all my presents! Say, Lassie, don't you b'lieve Auntie sent that on purpose 'cause she had it all planned for my coming here to be a birthday present to you?"

"Why, I never thought of that before," said the little girl. "Course she did, and she was keeping *that* part of it a secret all the time. O, Laddie, Laddie Lee, is n't

my dear Mamma the very bestest, sweetest one in the world?"

"Well, next to *mine* she is, but you know we must always think our very *own* mothers the best that ever could be, even — well, even if they did n't really happen to be. But then, you know, our's really and truly *are*, and — say, Lassie, I'm not one bit homesick, but I do wish I could go and kiss Mamma just one little minute. I truly do! — Hark! I hear some boys, don't you?"

The sound of hearty boyish laughter came floating down that way, and the children quickened their steps.

"That's the hotel," exclaimed Lassie, as they came in sight of a large white house which stood well back from the road, and was surrounded by noble trees and much shrubbery. From the tower of the building a flag was waving in the breezes, and Laddie managed to spell out the name of the hotel which was

given in large red letters on the flag. "That 's the Whitford," repeated Lassie, "and it 's full of people all summer. I s'pose some of those people in the stage to-day were coming here. Some do 'bout every day."

"The sweet lady was n't," replied Laddie, "nor the fat old farmer man, 'cause he was going to his farm, and the lady told me, you know, to bring you to her gray stone house, and she 'd be glad to see us. I did n't care much 'bout the other people in that bumpity stage; they just sat still and did n't do anything 'cept look out the windows. What are those boys doing?—see them."

The children stood at the gate entrance and watched a group of boys which had formed at one end of the lawn belonging to the hotel.

Presently, with shouts of laughter, the boys separated, and one of them ran forward a little distance, stooped over, placing

his hands on his knees, and bracing himself as, one by one, the others ran and leaped over him.

“Oh, *I* know what that game is!” said Laddie. “I ’ve seen boys do it in the Park; it’s real easy.”

“You ever do it, too?” from Lassie.

“No-o, not exactly,” was the reluctant answer, “but I ’ve always known I *could* if I ever wanted to.”

They watched the boys at their game a little longer, and Laddie was more and more convinced that it was “the easiest game that ever was.” He was seized with a great longing to do it himself, but of course he could n’t go and play with strange boys, and beside that, they were larger boys than he, and would n’t want him anyway even if he knew them. At last he could bear it no longer, so he turned to Lassie and asked if she would play the game with him.

“It’s called ‘leap-frog,’ and it’s real

fun. Will you let me leap over you, Lassie? Please do."

Lassie drew back. "I don't like that kind of game," she said, "and I don't b'lieve you 'd do it right, anyway, Laddie Lee."

"Oh, dear! I most wish you were a boy!" sighed Laddie; "'cause boys always do things 'thout being coaxed."

Lassie looked a trifle indignant. "Well, *I* don't wish I were a boy," she said; "not a truly boy, I mean; but I am a *kind* of a boy, anyhow, and if you don't b'lieve me, just ask Mamma 'n see what she 'll tell you I am. You just ask *her*!"

"No, I don't want to wait and ask Auntie; you tell me yourself, 'cause there is n't but one kind of a boy, and that 's a — a *boy*, same as any boy you see around. So now!"

"Yes there is," laughed Lassie, who liked a little joke, and was a little joker in her way; "yes there is! there are '*tom-boys*,' and that means girls that like doing

boy things, and climbing trees, and doing careless things, and being noisy, and racing about tearing their dresses and things like that. Ah ha! did n't I tell you I was a *kind* of a boy? Mamma tells me I'm her 'Tomboy,' oh, lots and lots and lots of times! So *now*, Mr. Laddie Lee!"

Laddie beamed all over his face. "Well then, if you are, I'm going to love you heaps and heaps more 'n I do already, and we'll have ever so much more fun, won't we. And now you'll play leap-frog, won't you, 'cause that's just erzactly the kind of game Tomboys would like — if — if they're *real* Tomboys, I mean."

Lassie did n't want to put her Tom-boy powers to any such test, but she did n't want to be thought a coward, and so she tried to persuade Laddie that they ought to be going right on to the post-office to mail that card, and there would n't be time to play any game at all.

But Laddie reminded her that Auntie

said the mail did n't go out till evening, and it was only a little bit of a while since they had left home. He coaxed her to "try the game just once," and rather than let him know how really afraid she was, she finally consented, and they went up the road a little, where the boys could not see them. Then Lassie stooped over, and put her trembling little hands on her knees, as she had seen the boys do, and with a "big scare" hiding deep down in her heart she waited for Laddie's leap.

Well, I'm sorry to have to say that the thing was what you children call "*no good*." Laddie's intentions were all right, and his confidence was unbounded, but for all that—he landed on Lassie's back and carried her along with him in such haste that presently when they picked themselves up from the dust and took a good look at each other, poor little Lassie showed a scratched cheek and a rent in her dress, and Laddie exhibited a hurt

knee which was beginning to puff up, and a very red nose which had scraped itself on the gravelly road as he fell.

Lassie looked at the rent in her dress with tears in her eyes. Possibly the tears were caused also by the smarting of her poor little cheek where the scratch showed red and sore. "I don't like, no, not one single bit, to play that horrid *leap-toad!*" she cried, "and I don't b'lieve my Auntie Lee would like you to ever play such rude games, Laddie Lee!"

Laddie sat down on a stone beside the road and rubbed his bruised knee as hard as he could, and then wiped a little blood off his nose with his handkerchief, for it was too bad, but the scratch was pretty deep, and would be sure, like Lassie's poor cheek, to tell a sorry tale to Mamma by and by.

"Well, you see, Lassie dear," he presently replied, "you see you didn't bend over low enough, and if you'd only been a

real boy, 'stead of only a Tomboy, you 'd have known you were n't bent over right."

"I did bend over a lot," said Lassie, "much as it felt comf'table to, but you do n't truly know how to do the game right, and—and I sha'n't ever in the world play such a horrid, hurting kind of a game as leap-toad again! So now!"

"'Tis n't 'leap-toad,' it's 'leap-frog!'" corrected Laddie, rubbing his knee still harder, and wishing he could cry a little bit without being a girl-boy, for his knee and his nose did hurt so!

But he felt sorry for Lassie, too, and as in her heart she felt sorry for him, notwithstanding the fact that all her woes were caused by him, she freely forgave him, and presently they were going along the road to the post-office again, scratches, bruises, torn dress, and all, for that postal card in Laddie's pocket must be mailed, crumpled and shabby as it had become by this time.



CHAPTER V

ANOTHER EXPERIENCE

WHILE at the post-office, Lassie remembered that her mother had told her to give Laddie's name to the post-master, so that when his Mamma wrote to him, the letter would be put safely into the Kearney box.

She did so satisfactorily, and the post-master peered over his glasses at the little newcomer, remarking that "he 'peared to be a likely chap," and giving them each a stick of "barber pole" candy, told them to run away and let him sort his mail.

So the children went homeward munching their candy, and wondering whether

the postmaster noticed the scratches on their faces.

“He ought to fast enough,” said Lassie, “for he’s got four eyes, you see,—two in his head ’n’ two on his nose.”

“Are n’t you smart, Lassie Kearney!” cried Laddie. “But I’m glad he did n’t ask us ’bout things, anyway ; and I think it was very p’lite of him not to, don’t you? Hi-o! my bump *hurts*, I can tell you!”

“So’s my cheek ; it’s aching hard ! Oh, what’ll Mamma say !” said Lassie.

“I’ll be ’shamed to tell Auntie you did n’t know how to play leap-frog,” laughed Laddie.

Lassie tossed her golden head and sniffed, as though Laddie’s speech were hardly worth noticing. But she could n’t allow him to think *she* felt at all humiliated over her failure in leap-frog, so she answered with much spirit : “Well, *I’m* not the leastest bit ’shamed ! I *should* be

'shamed to let Mamma b'lieve I knew how to play such rude, hurting games, and—and——"

At that moment an angry hiss startled the children and they turned around to find that a big, cross old turkey gobbler, resenting their approach, and not fancying the red tie at Laddie's throat, had flown over a low stone wall at hand, and was ready for a fight. To say that Laddie and Lassie *ran*, would n't half express the way in which they flew down the road, but not before Laddie's fat leg had received a sharp peck from the turkey's bill. Poor little chap! he was badly frightened, and his dignity quite upset. He certainly had never dreamed that he would ever be running from a *turkey gobbler*, "things" he had often seen when in the country with his mother, and never had any occasion to be afraid of.

But this was a great, cross, ugly old fellow who did n't like the red in Lad-



die's tie, nor the red bow on Lassie's hat, and he wanted to show them how hard his bill was when he got a chance at a good peck of anything, no matter what.

I'm sure I do n't know which ran the faster, Lassie or Laddie, but I know that they outran the gobbler, and he finally stalked back to the yard where his relations were peacefully eating corn, and feeling far happier without him than with him no doubt.

When the little couple got home, Mamma looked at them in amazement. Their sweet little faces were bathed in perspiration; Lassie's torn dress was hanging down on one side, her poor scratched cheek was looking pretty sore, and she had n't gotten quite over her fright at the big gobbler. Laddie's brown eyes were full of tears, for the lump on his knee was pushing the stocking out by this time, and betraying the hurt very plainly, his poor little nose

was really badly skinned, and he was feeling very miserable indeed, and very near to being a homesick little visitor in the bargain.

“Why, Laddie Lee! Lassie Kearney!” exclaimed the astonished Mamma. “Is this the way in which you come back from your walk? What has gone wrong with you?”

Then they told their tales of woe, taking turns at the telling (because Mamma simply would n't let them carry out their attempt to talk both at once, as they tried to) and confessing with great shame, and many blushes, how and why the game of leap-frog had been a failure.

Then she sat down and laughed, actually laughed at their plight, and though you may think it was a very unsympathetic thing for her to do, yet it was in reality the wisest plan, for if she had pitied them in words as she was pitying them in her heart, they would have gone

on pitying their own little selves to such a degree that very soon there would have been a big rain of tears, and sobs, and a regular gloomy time all around. But when Mamma made them see the *funny* side of the matter, and joked about it, even all the while she was bathing the wounds, and bringing comfort back again, why, of course, Laddie and Lassie began to laugh with her, and they made fun of each other for being afraid, and for running away from "only a turkey gobbler."

As for the torn dress! there were other little gowns in a closet upstairs, and Mamma knows how to mend rents in all sorts of little garments.

So, after all, when supper was ready the trials and woes of the walk to and home from the post-office were forgotten, —though Laddie limped a little still,—and there were two very good appetites, even better ones than Mamma's, to enjoy the nice supper.

“When bed-time comes,” said Mamma, “I’ll tell you a story about a little girl I knew of, and what she did at a Thanksgiving dinner. I don’t believe I’ve ever thought to tell *you* the story, Lassie, for all I’ve told you so many.”

That was good news for Lassie and Laddie, you may be sure, and they were quite ready when by and by the clock used its musical voice to tell them it was time for good-night.

The little “nighties” were on at last, and the lame knee was bandaged, the scratches soothed with healing lotions, and the little prayers (which, I am glad to say, neither Lassie nor Laddie had ever omitted at night, nor in the morning, so long as they could remember, owing to the teachings of each dear mother)—the little prayers were softly repeated at Mamma’s knee, and then the pretty white beds received each its occupant, and the children were ready for the promised story.



CHAPTER VI

THE STORY ABOUT A "THANKFUL DINNER"

I WILL explain here that Laddie's small room opened out of the large room where Mamma slept on one side, and the little room which was Lassie's own cunning "cubby-hole," as she called it, opened out of Mamma's on the other side. So when both her midgets were in bed at last, Mamma seated herself in the very centre of her own room and began her story.

"But first I want you to promise me," she said, "to shut your little claptraps the moment you say good-night to me, and not talk to each other the least little bit after I have gone down-stairs, for you

are both tired out and must go right to sleep."

They promised readily enough, and so the story was begun. It was called "The Thankful Dinner," which was what the little girl in the story called it.

"Once on a time," said Mamma, "there was a little girl named Kathie, whose grandma and grandpa lived in the country on a farm. She was only between four and five years old when she went one Thanksgiving time, with her Mamma and Papa, to stay a few days at the farm, where she was sure to have a beautiful time, and be petted and spoiled, as she always had been, by that dear old grandpa and grandma.

"Well, on Thanksgiving Day they had a fine dinner. A big, bouncing turkey and cranberry sauce, and celery and all sorts of nice vegetables, and then a splendid big pudding, and pies and nuts and raisins, and—oh, everything that was

necessary to make a rousing good sort of Thanksgiving dinner!"

Just here Laddie couldn't help interrupting: "Goody! tell you what! that makes a boy hungry right off!"

"Yes," chimed in Lassie, "I'd just like some of those nuts 'n' raisins this minute. Go on, Mamma darling, it's a lovely story so far."

"Well, little Kathie was allowed to have a share of all that was good for such a little girl, you know, and finally the dinner was finished. There had been other company at that dinner besides Kathie and her father and mother, and while they were still at the table, Kathie had been excused and allowed to put on her warm coat and hat and play out of doors. So when the dinner was done, and the grown-up people were talking and laughing together and making a fine noise in the parlor, little Kathie, who had felt sorry for the hens and chickens which

were picking and pecking for a "Thankful dinner" out of the cold ground (she was a very tender-hearted little thing, you must know), made a plan in her heart which she was sure was a good one, and must be acted upon at once. So she went into the kitchen to see the woman who cooked for grandma — but there was nobody at all in the kitchen, for the cook had gone up to her room to get something, and nobody else was anywhere near.

"But on the table, where cook had placed them until she could come down and clear things away, were the remains of the turkey and the jellies and the gravy, and so forth.

"What did Kathie do then, do you think? She got a plate and put some loose pieces of turkey on it, and some bones which had been partly picked, and she dipped some gravy out on the pile, and then she added some jelly, and po-

tatoes, and put a kitchen towel over it all and scampered as fast as her little legs would let her, back to the barn, and spreading the towel on the barn floor, she set the large plate and its contents in the middle of it. Then she ran out and "shooed" all the hens and the chickens she could find into the barn, and put Rover in with them, while she brought the cat from the woodshed, and the three baby-cats besides, and finally got the entire family of pets in the barn together. By using all her little strength—and fortunately the task was n't very hard—she got the barn doors closed, shutting herself inside with the other Thanksgiving guests.

"By that time the doggie had eaten a good share of the feast, of course, and pussy, who wanted a share, arched her back and spit at him, and tried to drive him away, and the hens and the half-grown chickens, frightened at the growl-

ing and yowling and fighting of the dog and cat, squawked loud as they could, and flew about the barn trying to get out, while the baby-cats mewed louder than they ever had before in their lives. Then Rover — with his feet all gravy and jelly — had a little fun chasing the hens, and made them squawk more than ever, and pussy, distracted between her desire for a good meal and her anxiety about her mewling kittens, raced back and forth like a crazy little cat.

“All this confusion was terrifying to Kathie, poor baby! It was n’t a bit as she had expected! It was n’t a nice “Thankful dinner” at all! It was only a horrid noise, and she was frightened, and could n’t open the barn doors to get away from everything so horrid. The doors seemed heavier than before, and she could n’t push them open. Rover acted so queerly, and pussy, too, she was as afraid of them as the chickens were—

and at last she climbed part way up the ladder and screamed for her grandpa as loudly as she could. "Grandpa! O! *grandpa!*" she cried, and the tears were running fast as rivers down her little fat cheeks. "O, my grandpa! come to Kathie!" she called again, and this time the old cook heard her, and calling her master and mistress she ran to the barn, while everybody followed, and Kathie's Mamma was in a great state of excitement as she heard her baby's voice.

"Well! when the door was opened, the secret of the great noise and confusion was out—and you may be sure not only the *secret*, but the cat, the dog, the hens, and all were out in a jiffy, and glad of their deliverance.

"Grandpa lifted his little darling down from the ladder, and brushed the wisps of hay and straw out of the tangled curls, and put the little maid—who had meant to be so kind and loving to the farm pets,

and was so grieved and disappointed at the result of her efforts—into the arms of her mother, and very soon the little one was sound asleep on a bed upstairs, while the grown-ups below were having a good laugh over the funny “Thankful dinner” provided by Kathie for her ungrateful guests.”

When Mamma finished her story, and the children had clapped and applauded over and over again, Lassie asked, “Mamma, did you ever hear what became of that Kathie?”

“Well, I believe she grew up, just as you will, I hope, and I ’m sure she did n’t give any more such funny dinners.”

Lassie continued,—and there was a merry little twinkle in her eyes,—“Well, *I* know what became of her, and I ’ll tell you. She grew up and had a little girl named ‘Lassie,’ and I guessed it, ’cause you told me once, long ago, that when you were little your Papa and Mamma

called you Kathie, 'cause your name's Kath'rine. Ah ha, Mamma! I've caught you!"

Mamma laughed, and confessed that Lassie had found her out, and then Laddie chimed in with a great, big, long yawn, and said *he* could have guessed it too, if Lassie had n't been so quick 'bout it he did n't have time.

"Just see how sleepy you are, Laddie," said his Auntie; "now kiss me good-night, and remember your promise, dear,—no talking.

Then with a loving kiss she tucked him up as snugly as a little mouse in its hole, and crossed her room to Lassie's bed, where a pair of dear, loving little arms clasped her, and sweet little lips found hers.

"Good-night, my two darlings! Good-night!" and then the darkness shut our little Lassie and Laddie quickly away from waking thoughts, and carried them into the land of dreams.



CHAPTER VII

A HAY - RIDE

THE next morning dawned beautifully, and the children were ready for any good time that might come along.

Mamma said she would like to have some flowers for her vases, if she knew a little girl and boy who felt like getting some from the garden.

Lassie and Laddie, who were at that moment sitting on the top step of the piazza, very busy doing nothing, at once took the hint, and were off for the little flower garden in a jiffy.

Lassie said, "*I'll* pick the fastest." And Laddie, afraid of that, worked so fast that he pulled most of his flowers off by their

heads, which was something a boy even younger than he ought to have known was the wrong thing to do—but his *intentions* were so good, and he was hurrying so fast to “get ahead of Lassie” and deliver his roses before she reached Mamma with her pinks, that his Auntie made the best of the bad bargain, and used a shallow dish for the poor stemless things, instead of the vase. A little later, still on the lookout for something to do, they each made a throne of the gateposts and perched there like little statues, only statues are not supposed to swing their feet and sing at the top of their voices, which these little human statues did.

“I know a song that Mamma made for me,” said Lassie. “Did your Mamma ever make one for you? Mine is a pretty one, and I’ve sung it lots of times. I don’t see how she ever thought of it; but then my Mamma, she’s the very wonderfulest mother that ever was!”

“ ‘Cept *mine!* ” interrupted loyal little Laddie. “ You must always say ‘cept mine, Lassie Kearney, ‘cause nobody *could* be wonderfuller than my Mamma, ‘n’ she’s your very own Auntie, so you ought to think so, too.”

“ Well, of course that was the meaning in my heart,” was Lassie’s reply, “ but I don’t always have time to say *everything* out loud. Anyway, your Mamma did n’t make a song ‘bout you!”

“ She’s *going* to some day — you just wait! And maybe it’ll beat yours. How does yours go?”

“ Well, you listen.” And the little high notes rang out on the air, while, as usual, the restless heels beat time.

“ When my little midget gets into a fidget,
Oh, what shall I do with her then?
I’ll tenderly scold her, and lovingly hold her,
And kiss her again and again.”

Over and over again did Lassie sing her little song, and Laddie, who readily caught

the words and air joined in with might and main, and their voices floated down the road till they reached the ears of Farmer Jones, as he sat on top of a wagon-load of hay and chewed a bit of straw pretty much as a lazy cow chews its cud.

The farmer was thinking just at that moment of the "little chap" he had taken such a fancy to the day before. He had been hoping that presently when he would pass the Kearney cottage he might catch a glimpse of Laddie playing about the place. When he heard the pair of singing voices, he touched up his oxen, and thought to himself:

"Wal'! there they be, both of 'em, sure enough! Now I wonder if the youngsters would n't like a ride top o' this 'ere load. Hello! hello, there!" he called, as turning the corner he saw Laddie and Lassie perched high on the gate-posts.

"There comes the nice old farmer, see Lassie!" exclaimed Laddie, and he waved

his cap above his head with a boyish "Hi! here I am!"

The team pulled up before the gate.

"Say, you two youngsters, how'd you relish a little fun, eh? What say to a ride along with me a little?"

Laddie was off the gate-post in a trice, and Lassie also slipped down to the ground, but instead of flying out to the hay-wagon as her cousin was doing she stood still by the gate and reminded Laddie that they had n't asked Mamma, and maybe they could n't go anyway, 'cause — Mamma — well they did n't know the — Mamma did n't let them go with strangers, did n't Laddie know it?

Poor little Lassie, she did n't want to be impolite, but there was Laddie actually climbing upon the wagon, and she *had* to remind him of Mamma's rule, though she had been so long about her sentence.

The farmer burst out laughing. "Bless your heart!" said he, "there ain't a chick

nor child 'bout here 'at don't know me. 'Farmer Jones,' you know! But wait lad, wait while the little gal asks her ma. Don't want ye to break any rules, you see; won't have a mite of fun if you do. Children must do as they're told. *I* did when I was a sonny like you."

Lassie had found Mamma, and Mrs. Kearney now appeared upon the porch. She smiled when she saw Mr. Jones.

"Oh, good-morning, sir! It was *you* who made friends with Laddie yesterday in the stage then? I did n't know it, as he did n't know your name. Why, certainly, the children will be very much obliged for their ride, and if you'll be kind enough to drop them at the post-office they may find some mail for me."

Lassie was n't a whit slower climbing to the top of that hay than Laddie, and they sank down like a pair of little birds in the soft nest they made for themselves in the fragrant pile.

“ Seem ’s though I ’ve got lots of *do* in me this morning,” said Lassie, “ have n’t you Laddie Lee ? ”

“Brimming full to the top of me with it,” was the reply. “ Say, Lassie,—say it good and strong, too !—are n’t you jolly, jolly glad just to be alive ? *I* am ! and are n’t you glad, too, Mr. Jones ? ”

“ Wal’, I reckon there ain’t any doubt of that, sonny ; don’t I look it ? ” turning a good-natured old face around to them, and beaming as warmly upon them as though he were a sunbeam itself.

“ Yes, sir, you look it,” replied Laddie, “ and you look some other thing, too,” he added a little shyly, as though he did n’t know whether he could with propriety say just what was in his honest little heart.

“ Wal’, sonny, say on, what yer hesitating ’ fer ? ”

Laddie hesitated no longer. “ You look ’s though you liked little boys ’n’ girls a lot ; do you ? ”

A loud, hearty laugh rang out from Farmer Jones's big throat, and he nearly tumbled off the board he was sitting on and back into the children's cosey nest.

"Oh, ho! oh, ho! wal' now, sonny, bless your little heart! You're the best guesser I ever heard of! Wal,' I'm fond of little boys and girls 'nough to wish I owned a bushel or two of 'em myself. Oh, yes, son, you've hit it that time."

"*I* guessed it, too," piped up little Lassie. "I was just in the middle of guessing it when Laddie said it," she added. "And I guessed it 'cause if you had n't been you would n't have let us ride on your nice clean hay, would you?"

"Wal, there might be men who would n't think it a good plan," replied the farmer, "but, you see, sissy, I don't happen to be one of that kind. What's that song you youngsters were a-singing when I came along? My but ye were goin' it full steam on."

“ Oh, that was a song my Auntie made up for Lassie,” replied the little boy. “ Was n’t it a jolly good one ? ”

“ You see,” confessed Lassie bravely, “ some days I do get so full of *fidgets* I don’t know what to do, ’n’ Mamma she made that song one day, and said whenever I felt a fidget beginning I must sing it, and she guessed it would drive the fidget away ; so in case Laddie should have one sometime, I made him learn the song. Shall we sing it again ? ”

“ Go ahead,” said Mr. Jones.

So the two little voices began again, and the words rang out merrily :

‘ When my little midget gets into a fidget,
Oh, what shall I do with her then ?
I ’ll tenderly scold her, and loving hold her,
And kiss her again and again. ’

“ Wal,’ now that ’s a grand good sort of song, an’ the words are nice, too, an’ sort o’ motherly ain’t they. Your Ma looks jest that kind, sissy.”

“She ’s the very darlingest — Oh !
Laddie, look ! see those *sweet* little
ducks going into the water with their
mamma !”

Laddie leaned over the pile of hay about
his snug little nestling hole, and saw the
ducks at which Lassie pointed, and the
farmer said :

“I can ’t sing for ye, but I can tell ye a
rhyme ’bout ducks. Guess I must have
learned it when I was a shaver. Goes
this way :

‘ Two little ducks I see out on the green.
The prettiest duckies that ever were seen.
Waddling and toddling, and busy at play,
Each in its own particular way.
Two little ducks, so cunning and sweet,
Paddling about on their busy feet.
Very dear playmates these duckies so wee !
Happy and noisy as duckies can be !
Here they go, there they go, full of their fun,
Out in the wind and out in the sun.
Two little duckies so busy at play
All in the shine of the summer day.

One is fair, yes, dainty and fair,
With pretty blue eyes, and sunny, bright hair.
She waves her arms and goes running to meet
The other wee duckie, all cunning and sweet.
And the sunbeams flicker and breezes blow
Wherever the two little wee ducks go.
The other duckie is dressed in yellow,
A fuzzy, feathery, web-footed fellow.
His eyes are black and his hair is brown,
And he turns his toes *in* as he struts up and down;
And he flaps his wings, and is quacking away,
Saying, no doubt, "What a beautiful day!"
So these are the duckies I see on the green,
The prettiest duckies that e'er could be seen,—
A little real duck, with feathers and all,
And my own little duckie, my girlie so small.'

"There now," asked the farmer, who had recited the rhyme in a comical way, and in his own peculiar style of language, — just as he talked, — "is n't that pretty good for an old feller like me? Can't see how on airth I came to remember the words so well, for it'd beat me to tell when I've said it before. Guess likely

you youngsters got workin' on me. Hello ! here's the post-office already !”

The children thanked him for his rhyme, and for the ride, which had been a special pleasure to them. He promised them another some day, as he helped them slide off the hay down to the ground. Two or three children of the village had seen the hay-wagon coming, and after Laddie and Lassie dropped to the ground, the other children threw up their arms shouting, “Oh, Mr. Jones ! please give us a turn now ! Can we get a ride, too ?”

“Lor', yes ! climb up with ye !” was his good-natured reply, and looking back from the post-office door, Laddie and Lassie saw the cart going on up the road with its new lot of passengers, who were going to enjoy it all as much as they had.

“I *knew* he was good to children, you see,” said Laddie, “and I like him more and more all the minutes I know him, don't you Lassie Kearney ?”

“Yes, I do, and I’m the gladdest that ever was that you met him on the stage journey.”

“So ’m I, and I wish I could pretty soon go and see the *lady* again. Oh, she was so sweet!” said Laddie. “*You* would want to see her again, if you’d been in the stage, too!”

They found a letter from Laddie’s mamma, which he took pains to kiss, dear little man, before putting it in his pocket for Auntie to read to him.

“Now let ’s hurry home,” he said. “Seem ’s though I can’t wait, I’m in such a hurry to see what my dear Mamma says to me!”

“Bet I’ll beat you to the corner tree!” cried Lassie, darting away like a young deer.

“Bet you can’t!” shouted Laddie sprinting after her, and because he was a boy, and she only a “*Tomboy*,” of course he reached the tree first, and sat panting on

the stone wall till her little feet brought her beside him.

“Ah, ha! did n’t I tell you?” crowed Laddie, his dimples showing.

“Ah, ha!” mimicked Lassie, “don’t you s’pose I *can* get ahead some day, when my legs feel more full of run than they did this time? You just wait! I can beat you easy, sometime.”

While they sat resting upon the stone wall, the stage-coach came rumbling along on its morning trip from the station.

Laddie and Lassie were surprised to see that its passengers were only five or six little girls and boys, who looked thin and pale and were very poorly dressed. But their little faces were full of smiles, and they had their heads out of the coach windows, looking eagerly at all the road-side sights afforded them.

The driver of the stage looked down at Laddie and nodded pleasantly as he recognized his small passenger of the

previous day, and with a flourish of his whip the same old loud-toned “g ’lang!” rang out, and the stage left Laddie and Lassie behind it in another minute.





CHAPTER VIII

LADDIE'S LETTER — CLOUDS

WHEN our little cousins reached home, there was plenty of news to relate to the Mamma,— of the fun of the hay ride, and how Mr. Jones liked the “Fidget” song, and the “Duck” rhyme he gave them; of the children who wanted a hay ride, too, when the post-office was reached; and of the farmer’s liking for little girls and boys, and how Laddie and Lassie had been “smart enough to guess he did, before he told ’em”; and of the children in the stage. And then Laddie said he had saved the *best* news to tell last, and he showed his Auntie the letter from his mother, and begged her to “read

it right away." So she read this nice little letter to her impatient nephew, while he and Lassie sat as closely beside her as they could possibly squeeze themselves.

"My little son Laddie is now, I am hoping, all safe and sound with the dearest of Aunties, and the sweetest of little Lassies, and they have kissed him, and hugged him, and are making him very happy, I know. But in this big city there are a Mamma and Papa I know of, who are missing a little brown-eyed boy, oh, so much ! and are wondering what they are going to do for his good-night kisses when half-past seven o'clock arrives and a little Laddie they are missing so will not be on hand to begin to think about bedtime. Yet, I am happy when I think of how happy *Lassie* is just now, and of what good times she and her 'birthday present' are going to have all through Laddie's visit. And I'm thinking that

now, this very minute, while I am writing this letter, there's a certain Auntie in Whitford who is almost ready to eat supper with a certain hungry young lady and young gentleman, and will soon be getting in my place that good-night kiss *I* want so much. Well, Laddie, little son, be a good boy, as you promised me, and be as happy as you can, and kiss Lassie for her Auntie here—and kiss Auntie also—and ask them to give you plenty of hugs and plenty of kisses for the Papa and Mamma who can't reach you from here. I shall no doubt get that postal card you said you would write, the first thing in the morning, for I'm sure my Laddie did n't forget to write. Now good-bye, darling boy, with love for all three of you from Papa and Mamma."

When Auntie finished the letter, she and Lassie put their arms around the little visitor and did just what his Mamma had

asked them to do, and he returned their attentions in the same way. Then he pronounced Mamma's letter to be "perfectly splendid!" and—then he suddenly turned his back and drew his arm across his eyes and pretended to see something worth looking at out-of-doors.

But though Lassie was deceived, and ran to see what *he* saw from the window, *Auntie* knew that the little boy was having just a wee bit of homesick feeling then, and that he would like to have gone straight back to his own dear Mamma's arms, just for a little while, if he only could have flown through the air like a little bird.

But he would have wanted, of course, to visit, fly back again to finish that birthday she knew very well, and she loved him all the more for the little affectionate, homesick heart he was trying so hard not to betray.

"Why, I should n't be the leastest 'sprised if it should rain, Auntie," Laddie called, after the lump in his throat had at

last been swallowed ; “ see the black sky over there ! ”

“ *That* what you 're looking at ? ” questioned his little cousin. “ Let 's look over there where the *blue* is ; it 's lots prettier than that black cloud.”

“ Yes, so it is,” said Mamma, who stood by Laddie's side and saw the big cloud, which sure enough threatened rain ; “ so it is, but all the same Laddie is right, and it will rain very hard before long.”

“ Oh dear ! just when we were going to play ‘ tag ’ over in the meadow ! ” complained Lassie.

“ And by 'n' by we were going to walk up to the hotel fence and see if the boys were playing leap-frog again ! ” added Laddie. “ Is n't it mean for it to rain ? ”

“ I would n't forget that it is the dear Father in heaven who sends the rain, Laddie dear, if I were you,” suggested Auntie quietly, “ and perhaps if the fields and flowers and all the whole beautiful

landscape could speak, they would tell us all how they need and are *glad* to be rained upon, and be revived and made fresh and bright again. I think as it is quite a long time since we had rain the earth must be very thirsty now. Did n't you notice any dust on the bushes at the roadside, and that the little brook running beside the post-office was quite low, showing all its stones and its gravelly bed very plainly?"

"Why, yes, we did, Auntie! I forgot 'bout the earth getting thirsty! course it wants to drink *sometimes*, and, after all, I don't b'lieve we care very much if it does rain, do we, Lassie?"

It was a very bright little face which Auntie looked down at, for the sun that had been hidden for a few minutes in his heart by that little cloud of discontent (and the little cloud of homesickness, too, perhaps) had pushed its sunny way out to the surface again, you understand, and

there it was, shining and dancing away just as usual.

“There's a little bit of a poem, or rather I should call it a *rhyme*,” said Auntie, “which I found one day in a magazine, about clouds and sunshine. I can remember it easily. Listen: it is for little folks.

“ ‘Oh, what if the big black clouds do show?
What need we care, when we surely know
That the beautiful sunshine is waiting behind,
And will come to the front at last, we will find!
So don't let us fret, nor ever forget
That, whatever the clouds, the sunshine lives yet.’ ”

Laddie and Lassie repeated that several times, till they knew it by heart, and by then the clouds had covered a large part of the sky, and the raindrops were beginning to patter about on the piazza roof, and down on the dusty road. Laddie's thoughts turned to his mother's letter again, and that made him say :

“Well, I'm glad I wrote that postal to Mamma yesterday, 'cause if I'd waited till to-day, maybe it would have been so

muddy we could n't have taken it to the post-office."

"Oh, but you *could n't* have waited till to-day, you know, Laddie Lee!" said Lassie. "You *promised* my Auntie to send it the very day you got here."

"Yes, I know I did, and I 'm jolly glad I did n't *forget* to remember," was the reply. "I always am going to keep my word, way on to the time when I 'm as big as my papa. He always keeps *his* word, 'n' he tells me I must believe him when he says he 's going to do a thing, 'cause he says jus' erzactly what he means, and that is always the right way to do, 'less you say, in a great hurry, something *bad* and *wrong*, 'n' then you must n't *mean* it, you see."

Lassie was listening very intently as Laddie talked, and he went on, very frankly confessing :

"Why, even when papa says, 'Laddie, I shall punish you if you do that again,'

he never once forgets to remember, and—and I truly do get punished, too!”

Lassie was very sympathetic, and drew nearer Laddie, as they sat in the window-seat together, and took hold of his hand lovingly, as he continued:

“Yes, and once when he told me he'd punish me if I pulled Annie's cap off again—you see, sometimes I just *can't help* pulling her cap, 'cause she won't let me play in the kitchen—I just thought maybe he'd forget 'bout it by 'n' by, and—and one day I thought Annie was the crossest that ever was, and I just pulled off her cap 'fore I thought, and it made her holler so loud that Papa heard her, 'n' he *did n't* forget to remember, no, *sir*, he did n't! and he made Mamma put me to bed right in the very middle of the day, when I had so much *do* in me, I could n't bear being in a still bed.”

“Oh, Laddie! I 'm sorry for you!” cried Lassie, “but papas *have* to make

their children mind, I s'pose. Mammass have to punish us, too, don't they?"

"Oh, yes, indeed! Mine keeps her promise just the same as Papa does. But — tell you what! they go on loving us a lot, don't they — all the same!"

Lassie was quite sure of that, too; and just then Mamma, who had listened from her chair in the distant part of the room to this little serious conversation, and had smiled to herself over it, had a plan which she thought might give the children a little rainy-day pleasure.

In one corner of the sitting-room stood a table with a very deep drawer, and that drawer had been gradually accumulating all sorts of odds and ends of things. Mamma had been intending to give that drawer a regular overhauling some day. But as yet that had not been done. But she felt sure the "overhauling" would be something her little folks would like to attend to, so she said:

“If anybody thinks it fun to clear out my big table drawer, and put it in nice order for me, I'll be glad and thankful to have it done this very minute.”

“Whoopee!” shouted Lassie, jumping to her feet. “Come on, Laddie! there's a pile of things in that drawer.”

So it happened that the rain, which had begun to attend very strictly to its particular mission by this time, was quite unheeded by the children, as they stood before that open drawer and took the contents out, laying them upon a large piece of paper which Mamma placed upon the floor for that purpose.

It would take too long if I tried to tell of all Lassie and Laddie found in that deep drawer, and of course there were many bits of things which Mamma said need not be put back again, as they were not important enough to keep. But the little folks found some photographs there, a few pretty pictures which were in an

envelope — and a rather shabby envelope at that, since it had lain here and there in Mamma's keeping for a long time before it finally had got tucked away in that table drawer.

“Oh, look! look Laddie!” cried Lassie; “here are some pretty pictures! oh, are n't they pretty! Mamma, I never saw any places like these, did I?”

“No, darling, you have n't as yet, but perhaps some day,—oh, some day quite a long way off as yet, when you are a young lady,—you may have the pleasure of seeing every one of those places, and many more beside. They are all pictures of foreign scenes, and Mamma got them in Europe before she became Mamma to a dear little Lassie, you know.”

She laughed and pinched the rosy cheek as she spoke; and, dropping down beside the children as they sat on the floor, she looked over the pictures with them.

“Did *you* go way to Eurip, Auntie?”

questioned Laddie, looking at her with admiring eyes. “Why, *I* did n't know you 'd ever in the world been so far away!”

“Yes, dear; your Uncle Jamie and I went abroad when we were married, and I enjoyed seeing the things which these photographs are showing *you* now so much that I brought the pictures home with me.”

“Can't you tell us 'bout them, Mamma?” asked Lassie. “What are those little boys doing in the water there?”

“And see all these birds on the ground, in *this* picture,” said Laddie. “Oh, what a big, big lot of 'em!”

Mamma gathered the photographs together, and getting a fresh envelope, slipped them inside, and wrote on the envelope — “Stories for Lassie and Laddie when bedtime comes.”

“Now, my little midgets,” said she, “you may take turns, each night, in drawing out one of these pictures, and after

you are in bed I will tell you about whichever picture happens to be drawn. Won't that be a good plan?"

The children were delighted, and both got upon their feet and raced over to where she stood at her desk, and fell upon her with so much frolicsome energy that, when she at last escaped from the room laughingly, her comb had tumbled to the floor, and as Laddie declared, "she looked just like a little girl-auntie."





CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST "BED-TIME STORY"

THE children were very prompt in getting ready for bed that night, and when the envelope containing the pictures was brought out, and Lassie was allowed the selection for that night,—because she was “the *lady*,” as Laddie said, “and gentlemen must always say ‘ladies first,’” — the picture that she chanced upon was a *Venetian* photograph, and represented the *Piazza* where St. Mark’s cathedral stands in Venice.

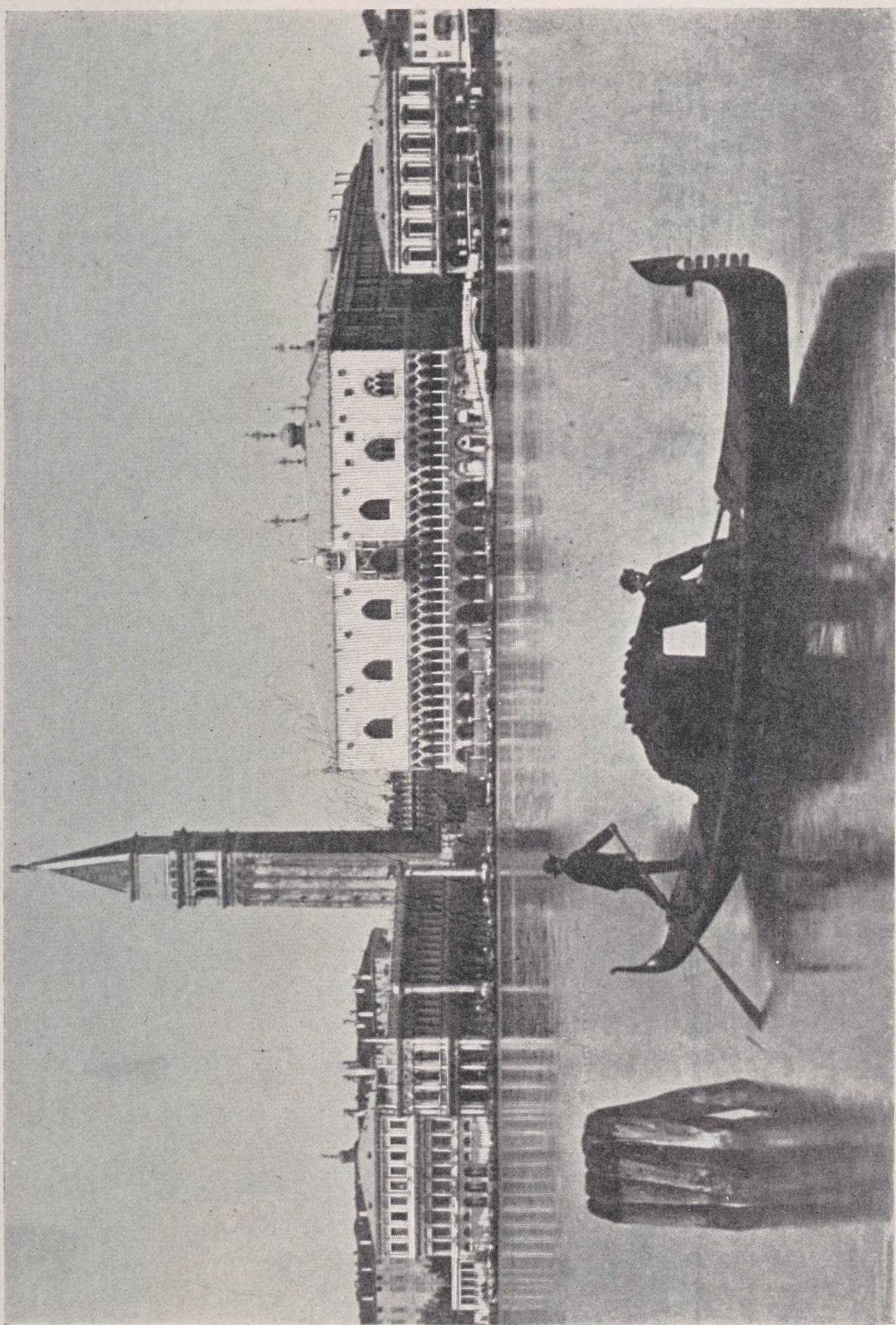
“Oh, this is the *pigeon* picture!” exclaimed Lassie. “See? All those dear, wee, cunning little pigeons cuddled on the ground! And it says underneath that it

is a *piazza*, but it does n't look the leastest like one, and it's down on the ground, like a street."

Mamma laughed. "Oh, Lassie, little girl! That word is pronounced in this way,—*Piatza*; and it means in Italian a *square*, and a promenade. That large church you see is a cathedral, and is named *San Marco*, which means in our language, 'St. Mark's.' That tower beside it, lifting itself so high in air, is the *bell tower*, and is called in Venice the *Campanile*—which you must pronounce *campinely*. All that is puzzling your little heads, I suppose, but I want to give you the *right* explanation while I'm about it. The bells in the *Campanile* belong to the church."

"But, Auntie, why don't they put the church bells *in the church*, 'stead of in that high tower?" questioned Laddie.

"I was about to explain, dearie, that in the long-ago days the church bells were



THE GRAND CANAL AND CAMPANILE.

considered to be too large and heavy in weight to be safely hung in the churches, or cathedrals, for it was feared their vibrations might injure the building—that is, might *weaken* it, you understand, when the bells were rung. So the campaniles—the towers like that you see in the picture—were erected close by, and made very strong on purpose to hold the heavy bells. This tower here is—only think of it!—four hundred feet above the water—the Grand Canal (which I will also explain to you, is the *street* in Venice. You can learn about that, however, presently). Well, this Campanile attracts crowds of visitors, because the view from the top is so magnificent, and the funny part of it is that you don't have to climb *steps*, as is the case generally when one seeks a view from a high place, but you walk up an incline made of stone, just like a sidewalk running up hill, you understand. And there is a story that once the great Em-

peror Napoleon Bonaparte rode on horse-back up to the very top, which, after all, was n't a difficult thing to do, because the incline is so gradual. There, now you understand about the church and the tower, so I'll tell you about the pigeons."

"Yes, and about the watery street, too!" urged Laddie. "What a funny place Venice must be! I'd want some *dry* streets, would n't you, Lassie, if we lived there?"

"Well, now, streets or pigeons -- which shall I tell about first?" asked his Auntie, looking at the clock, for she had no intention of trespassing on the *sleep* hour with her bed-time tales.

"*Streets!*" said Laddie, and Lassie, impatient to get to the "cunning pigeons," had to wait a little longer.

"Well, then," began her Mamma, "Venice is the only city in the world, I believe, where *canals* form almost all the streets. There are some little back ways

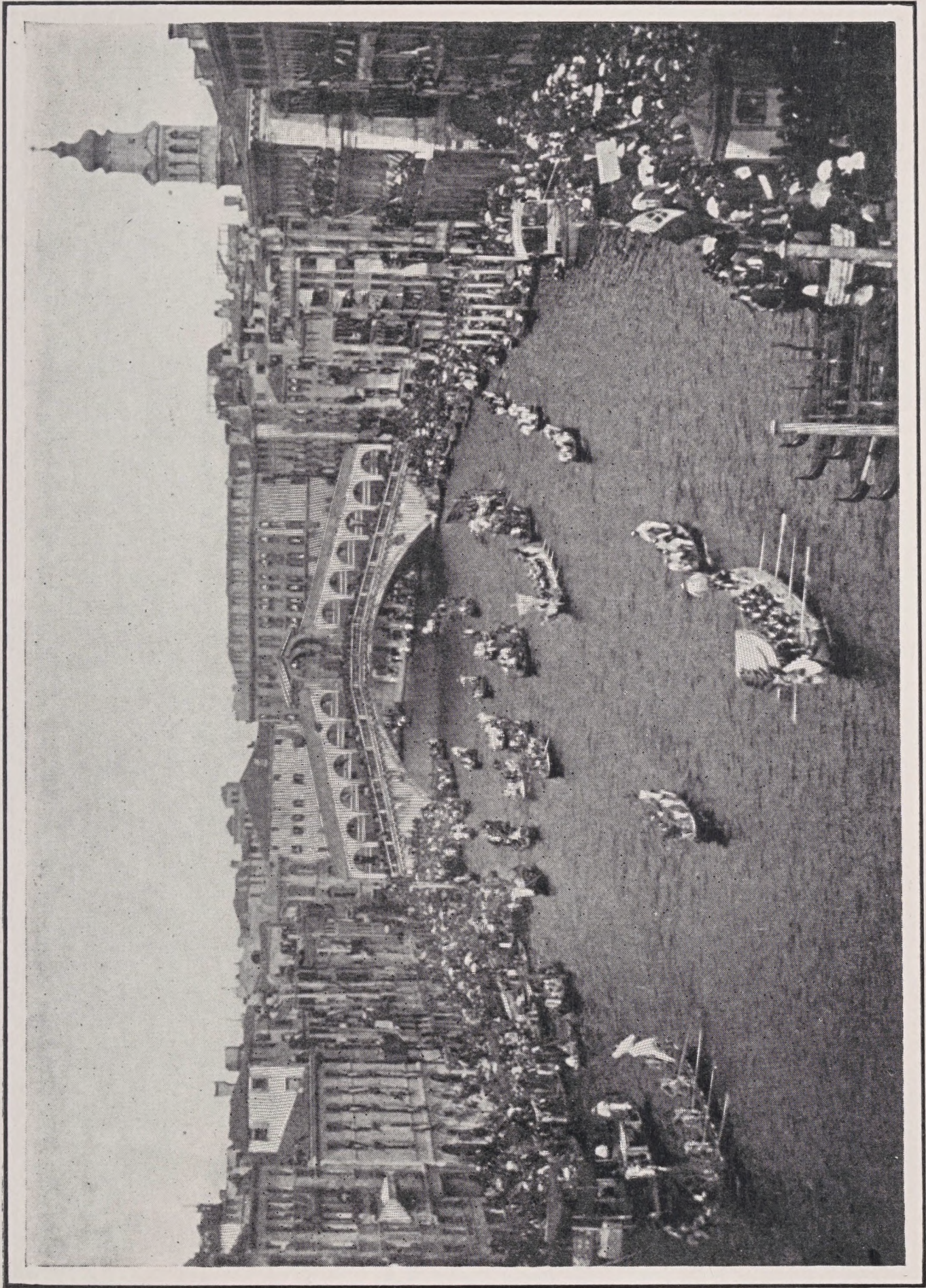
here and there, narrow little things like alleyways, running behind, and sometimes squeezed between houses, but the *canals* form the main streets, and people go about in boats called gondolas, which are propelled by *gondoliers* — the men who are the same as our cab drivers, you know. They stand at one end of the gondola, and send it along about the Grand Canal — the main street of the city — and also in and out of the *side* waterways, and people call a gondola just as they would hail a cab in any other city. It is very delightful to take a "drive" in one of those pretty gondolas! See, here in the picture you can see one. And there is the gondolier — see him? — with his long oar, and in his picturesque costume. The steps of the hotels and houses lead right down to the water's edge, and the ripples playing about the marble landings make a very musical sound all day. Then at night, in the early evening, we used to

enjoy seeing the 'concert gondolas,' as we called them, going slowly up and down, decorated with their colored lanterns, looking so gay and bright, and filled with Italian musicians who gave us fine concerts with mandolins and violins and pretty good voices (though sometimes, I will confess, their music was hardly deserving of that name). The musicians were playing for money, of course, and made quite a fair living in that way during the season when the hotels were crowded with visitors."

"Now the pigeons, Auntie?" said Laddie, and Lassie clapped her hands.

Auntie glanced again at the clock. There was still time to spare, and the children's eyes were wide awake as could be. So she continued.

"Those dear little pigeons belong to the city government, as their ancestors did before them years and years back in the pages of history. They are so cher-



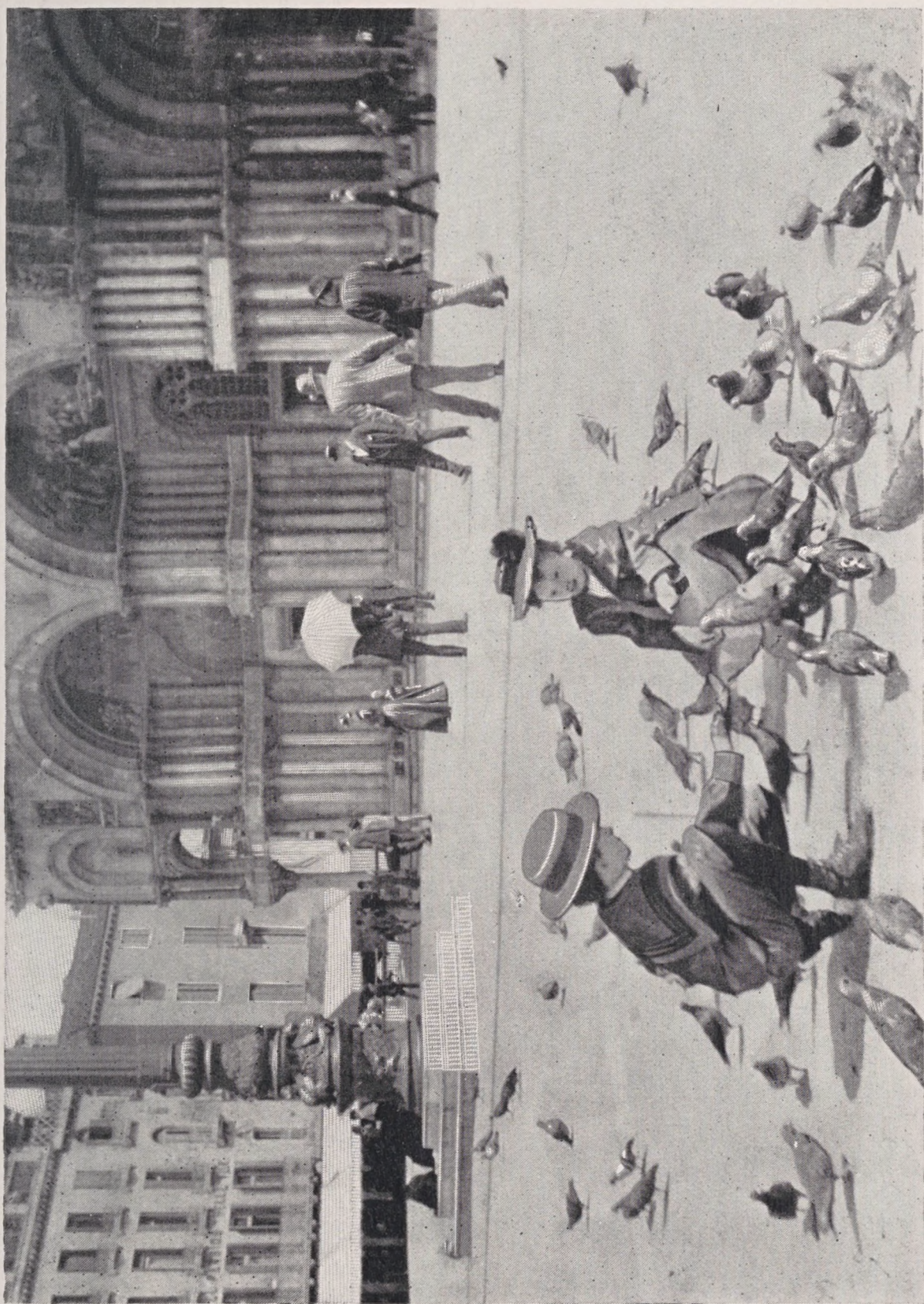
GONDOLA REGATTA ON THE GRAND CANAL.

ished and *venerated* by the city, that if any person, no matter *who* might do it, should attempt to catch one of them, to steal it, or hurt it, or to *sell* it, a big fine would be the penalty, and probably imprisonment beside. At midday, the clock on the clock-tower strikes clearly, and is the signal to those pretty birds that their dinner is ready. (*Once* a day they are fed by the government's orders, and as I have said, that is at the mid-day.) Then they come fluttering by scores and scores, yes, by the hundreds, from all sorts of hiding-places, and light upon the *piazza* there,—the large square, as you see,—and have a good time pecking away at the corn and food thrown there for them by the persons who have especial charge of the pigeons' dinner hour. It is such a great sight that people gather there at midday on purpose to see the birds fed."

"But, Mamma dear," interrupted Las-

sie, "can't they have any breakfast and supper? I should think they'd be hungry only eating once a day."

Mamma smiled. "Why, girlie, it seemed to me as though those pigeons were *always* eating, and for this reason: there is a man there who sells to anybody wishing to have the fun of feeding the birds at any time during the day small cornucopias of paper holding corn, — well, about a few cents' worth of it, and just as soon as those pigeons see any one holding one of those little parcels, down they come from their hiding-places in the towers, and the many snug cornices of the palace and church windows, and the first thing you know there'll be a pigeon on your head, on your arm, clinging to your shoulders, and even perching on your hands, and fluttering eagerly to get at that nice yellow corn they saw you buy for them. Why, do you know that the first time *I* bought a package of it,



PIGEONS IN THE SQUARE.

I actually had to sit down on the base of one of the columns in the square, for I was so covered with those pigeons that I was nearly smothered, and Papa, Lassie, laughed at me, because they pounced down so suddenly I was half frightened. You see I chanced to be the only one just at that time who was buying the corn,—there were but few people about at that hour,—and of course the greedy little pets made a swoop upon me in no time. It is a very pretty sight to see the birds strutting around upon the pavement of the square, and being so tame and sociable, and cooing happily in their feelings of perfect safety. There, now the clock is telling me very plainly that my story must stop on this instant, and you two little human pigeons must fold your wings and cuddle down in your nests and sleep—sleep—sleep, till morning."

Lassie and Laddie drew long breaths

of contentment, and it was plain to be seen that the bed-time stories were going to prove very successful and delightful affairs.

“ I wonder what *I’ll* pull out of the envelope to-morrow night,” said Laddie. “ Oh, is n’t it the bestest fun in the world, Lassie ? ”

“ Yes, indeed ! and I wish the envelope could be a fatter one,” replied Lassie, “ so’s we’d be a long time getting to the very end.”





CHAPTER X

THE "FRESH-AIR" CHILDREN

THE next afternoon, as it was a charming day, Laddie asked if he and Lassie might be allowed to try and find the house where his "pretty lady" lived, who had told him her name was Mrs. Spencer. "She'll be wondering why I don't hurry to see her," he said, "and I'd be 'shamed if I forgot her so soon. You see, Auntie dear, she was very polite and nice to me in the stage."

"Run along, Laddie boy," was his Auntie's reply, and Lassie was ready, of course, to "do and dare" anything which her dearly loved little cousin might suggest.

So away went the two, scampering up the road like young colts, and promising to stop at the post-office before returning.

It was a pleasant walk, and the children took their time about it, stopping to watch the squirrels and listen to the birds and to play along the roadside as all children love to do. So that when they finally reached Mrs. Spencer's pretty home, where the little fountain was playing merrily on the lawn, and the sunbeams were flickering about amongst the trees, the afternoon was half gone.

But the sparkling fountain was not the only thing playing on the lawn. No indeed! Laddie and Lassie were astonished to find several children there, running about and enjoying themselves as if they owned the whole place.

"She never told me she had any more children than the little boy who died," said Laddie, a little indignantly. "I would n't have felt so sorry for her if I

had n't thought she was lonesome 'thout any little son."

"Why, Laddie Lee!" whispered Lassie, "those are n't hers at all! Those are the little girls and boys we saw in the stage yesterday, don't you know? See, they've got those same funny clothes on."

"Oh, yes! and there's the boy that had such awf'ly thin cheeks, see him over there, Lassie? Oh! does n't he look sick as can be!"

"But what makes 'em dare to come and run all over Mrs. Spencer's nice grass?" wondered Lassie. "I don't truly 'spose she'd let 'em if she knew it, do you Laddie?"

While they were wondering, they were also walking up the path to the front door of the cottage, and I am inclined to think that they put on quite an air of importance when they noticed the other children gazing at them, because, you see, as *they* had been *invited* to visit the house

and they fancied that those other children were evidently only intruders where they had no right to be, Laddie and Lassie could n't help feeling somewhat superior in importance.

Finally Laddie said to one of the "intruders," "What *you* doing in this lady's garden? you don't live here!"

"Yes we does, too!" came the answer, which so surprised Laddie that he could n't think of any more questions to ask, and Lassie wondered if it would n't be entirely right, under the circumstances, for her to make a face at the saucy little strange girl, just to "serve her right for being so—so *imperent* to Laddie."

But at that moment the children at whom our little cousins were staring somewhat angrily set up a shout and smiled all over their faces as they ran towards a lady who was coming around a corner of the cottage.

"Here 's our kind lady! here she

comes!" they cried, and Laddie and Lassie recognized Mrs. Spencer. Her sweet face was as smiling as the little faces of the children who greeted her, and when presently she saw *our* two little folks standing side by side on the piazza, she smiled all the more, and hurried forward to greet and welcome them.

"Well, my bonny Laddie," she said, "and my wee bonny Lassie. I am glad to see you again," taking a little hand in each of hers and pressing it gently, while they replied somewhat shyly, "How do?"

Then Laddie stood on tip-toe, and whispered in her ear as she bent towards him :

"I—we—did n't know you had so many children—you said you were lonely 'cause your little boy died; but Lassie guesses these are n't yours at all, 'cause we saw 'em in the stage yesterday."

"Bless your little heart, dearie!" re-

plied the lady with a laugh. "Lassie was right; these are only my little '*Fresh-air-funders*.' Don't you know about the Fresh-air-fund children that come from the hot cities a week or two each summer, and have good times wherever kind-hearted people are willing to send, and to receive them?"

"No ma'am," replied Laddie. "I do n't know 'bout 'em at all, 'n' Lassie does n't either, do you?" turning to the little girl. No, Lassie did n't seem to know about the subject either, and so Mrs. Spencer, after bidding the little "Fresh-airs" run back to their play, sat down on the steps of her pretty vine-clad porch with her small visitors, and entertained them by telling all about the good work done to poor half-starved and half-clothed little children whose homes were in the poorest and unhealthiest parts of large cities, and especially of New York City. She told how certain charitable

societies had provided places in the country where the poor little ones could be sent in the care of kind women for a week or two, so that they might have the benefit of fresh air and good food, and enjoy a little of the good things which children whose circumstances are more fortunate can enjoy *all* the time in abundance.

She told Laddie and Lassie that a great many kind-hearted people who lived in the country, and had plenty of room and ground to spare, were willing to have a few little unfortunate children come and stay with them a little while, and have as good a time as those children for whom the missions were providing as well as they could. "You see there are so many, many, *many* little people who live in this world," said the lady, "whose circumstances never were, and never *can* be, as fortunate as so many other children's are!—yours and Lassie's, for instance, and others who are so used to riches and good times

(even *more* than you dear little ones are enjoying, perhaps) that they don't really *appreciate* all they are enjoying day by day. Oh, yes, there are so many of the other kind — the sorry and hungry, and sad and sick kind — that we *must* look about us, and see if we can't put a little sunshine into their lives, when God has given us so much for ourselves to enjoy, don't you think so?" Lassie and Laddie nodded seriously. They were feeling very sorry for all those poor little people the lady was speaking of, and they had never thought about such things before.

"Well," continued Mrs. Spencer, "so one day I wrote to one of my friends in the city that if she could send me six little ones who needed change of air and scene, I would take care of them for a week, and perhaps a little longer, if they were children who would not get beyond my control, nor give any trouble to my neighbors. So yesterday the stage brought these little

girls and boys to me, and I have had two good rooms in the barn put in good order with little cots all sweet and comfortable, and plenty of water and soap and towels, and everything nice for them, and Bridget, my good old servant, helps me look out for them. They are so happy here and are such good little things that I dare say I shall actually miss them when they go."

"Guess they've got dreadfully big appetites for eating!" exclaimed Lassie, "it makes *me* awf'ly hungryfied when I've been playing all day."

"Me, too!" put in Laddie, "and, oh, I guess your table must be bigger 'n my Auntie's!"

Mrs. Spencer laughed. "Come and see their table," she said. So they followed her into a nice little room leading out of the clean, shining kitchen, and there was a table all set ready for the supper-time, and six chairs in place ready for their small occupants.

“I look in at them while they are eating,” said Mrs. Spencer, “and then I go to my own little table in the dining-room, and eat all alone, and sometimes I’m not sure but I wish all those little ones were my very own babies.”

That made Laddie and Lassie laugh, and then they said they guessed they’d “better be going,” and said they’d had “a real nice time,” and then Mrs. Spencer put her arm about Laddie and kissed him on his beautiful forehead, over the soft brown eyes which reminded her of her own little son.

She kissed Lassie, too, and invited them both to come again, which they gladly agreed to do. Mrs. Spencer then put into Laddie’s hand a little printed slip which she said she had cut from a paper a few days before, and which had helped her to decide about sending for the children. She added that his Auntie might like to read it to Lassie and himself some

day. They thanked her and passed down the walk to the gate, and this time they *smiled* at the children who romped on the lawn, and the children smiled back at them.

"They've just as much right to play here as *we* have, have n't they?" whispered Lassie.

"Course they have!" replied Laddie.





CHAPTER XI

THE POEM, THE SONG, AND THE STORY

WHEN the small cousins reached home it was almost supper-time, and Mamma was at the gate watching for them. "Well, I did n't know whether you were trying another game of '*Leap-toad*,' " she said laughingly, "or whether that gobbler friend of yours had been having another talk with you."

Lassie and Laddie laughed, too, and said they had been having a better time than *she* could half guess, and if she would sit down right away and read that piece of paper Laddie had brought home, they would tell her all about it.

So Mamma dropped herself straight

down, as obediently as could be, into the big piazza rocker, and while Lassie perched herself on the large flat arm of the chair at one side of her mother, Laddie took a seat on the other arm, and this is what they listened to :

THE LITTLE LAMBS OF THE FLOCK

Turn them out! turn them out! turn them out, do!
Under the skies all so sunny and blue!
Gather them in from the alley and street,
Poor little vagrants! and give them a treat
That can never be found amid brick and midst stone,
But out on the fair country meadows alone.
Give them a taste of the rose-perfumed breeze;
Give them the shade of the old apple trees;
Give them the sunshine unstinted and free;
Give them a glimpse of the wide-rolling sea;
Give them the songs of the birds as they fly
Up to the clouds in the far-off blue sky;
Teach them to laugh; let them shout if they will,
Better than medicines heartaches to kill.
Turn them out! turn them out! turn them out, do!
Lambs of God's flock, to the pastures so new!
Far from the by-ways of sorrow and woe,
Out to the meadows the wee lambs should go.

“Oh, I think that is such a pretty poem!” cried Lassie; and Laddie said, a little thoughtfully:

“Do you know, Auntie darling, I never have thought before 'bout children being like little lambs. But we *are*, are n't we? I mean it does seem like it. You grown-up ones are God's *sheep*, you see, and of course we children are His lambs, and I think we ought to feel very proud of that, don't you? I guess He looks out for *us* more'n He does for you big sheep, 'cause we're so little we need Him a lot more. Does it say who wrote that rhyme, Auntie dear? I'm going to tell Mrs. Spencer how we liked it.”

Auntie lifted the little hand which lay upon her shoulder, and not caring a bit that the dust of roadside play had made it a very soiled little hand, she pressed her loving lips upon it, and gave it a tender squeeze, as she replied:

“Yes, my darling, we are indeed the

sheep and the lambs of the dear Shepherd, who is always guiding and guarding us as He watches from the fold above; and it is a comforting thought for us all, is n't it, to know that He sees and He knows all we think and do, and will never stop caring for and loving us. Well now, let me see who wrote this. There are only the initials of the writer signed, and they are M. D. B., so we must be content with that."

"Anyway, I guess she loved little children," exclaimed Lassie, "and I'm much obliged to her, are n't you, Laddie?"

Laddie agreed, and then the supper bell was heard tinkling from the dining-room, and while they were at the table the children told Mrs. Kearney all about the Fresh-air children, and how the little poem had helped to influence Mrs. Spencer in her decision to take them; and auntie was very much amused and interested as Laddie described his and Lassie's first idea

in regard to the little strangers being "intruders."

"I wish *we* could do some nice things for little 'Fresh-airs,'" said Laddie presently.

"Let's try and think up something," said Lassie, and Mamma said she had no doubt they would one day chance to "think up" just the right thing, and meanwhile they would better finish their supper, and have a little romp in the garden before bedtime.

A little later, when the soft sweet twilight had settled down over the landscape, and the hills in the distance were turning purple, Laddie and Lassie came from a game of "tag" in the garden, and sat down with Mrs. Kearney on the porch.

"Now we have n't got one teenty little sunbeam left to say good-night to," said Laddie.

"*I* have," replied his Auntie with a

laugh. "I have *two* dear sunbeams to say good-night to very soon. I've been singing a song to my sunbeams, too, while you have been playing."

Lassie exclaimed then, "Oh! I see your eyes all twinkling, Mamma, and you've been making a joke, I know it, I just know it!"

"You're a famous guesser, are n't you, girly," laughed Mamma. "Well, here's my song, and somehow it came popping right into my head just on purpose for you and Laddie."

So she began a merry little melody which I need n't copy here, but I'll give you the words that went with it:

Just like little sunbeams
Are my girl and boy!
Little faces merry,
Hearts all full of joy.
How they shine about me,
Flitting here and there!
Brown-eyed, bonnie Laddie;

Lassie, sweet and fair.
Oh, how much I love them!
Words can never say!
And they 're growing dearer,
Dearer every day!
Long may they be happy
Little sunbeams bright,
Flitting all about me
From morning until night.

If Laddie and Lassie did n't smile like veritable "sunbeams" when Mamma finished her little song, it was n't because they did n't stretch their mouths and *beam* sufficiently to show how they liked her loving compliments. You may be sure that no song ever had such admiring and attentive listeners before, and Mamma had to sing it all through again, ere the children were willing to get ready for bed.

"Well, what shall my story be about to-night, I wonder?" asked Mamma a little later, after her children were in bed and ready for the "bed-time envelope," as they had named it.

“It ’s *my* turn to draw the picture,” said Laddie, and he put his little fingers in the envelope.

“Hello! *here’s* a picture I like,” he shouted, pulling forth a photograph which showed the harbor at Naples, where the ships were lying at anchor a little off-shore, and amongst them a large ocean steamer, which had anchored a little beyond the smaller craft, and looked as though it were enjoying its lazy rest on the calm waters, after its long voyage from New York.

It was a very fine, *colored* photograph which Laddie had chanced upon, and the children were surprised at the blue tint of the water.

Mamma allowed Laddie to have a good look at it, and then she carried it over to Lassie, whose bright eyes were as blue as the sky in the picture.

Then mamma took her seat between the two little rooms, as on the night

before, and began her description of the photograph.

“Yes, the water is very blue,” she said; “it surprised *me* as much as it has you, when I first saw it, and it seemed to me very beautiful. The Italian skies are very blue, also, and the waters seem to be very often like a second sky when you see them — this very bay, for instance — lying quietly, almost without a ripple, under the soft heaven above. That large steamer at anchor is the same kind in which your papa and I crossed the ocean, and the passengers were taken from the large boat to the wharf in small boats, such as you saw in the picture approaching shore. It is n’t always convenient for those very large ocean steamers to get close in to land, even at other places, and so they have to be transferred in this way. Well, when we got into harbor, and long before we left the big steamer, as I stood looking over the side of the

boat, I noticed a great number of small boys—and not a few men, too—who were begging the passengers to toss coins in the water, and see them dive for the money. They could not speak English, of course, but they made signs and motions, and now and then the word ‘*mon-ie*’ would be cried out by the older ones, for they had been quick enough to learn at least *that* word of our language. Then, too, many of the passengers on our ship, who were old travellers, understood Italian fairly well, and could speak to the divers, and laugh with them, and a great many coins were tossed over into the water for the fun of seeing the men and boys dive for them.”

“Why, I should n’t suppose they ever could find money in the water!” said Lassie.

“*I ’d* have just *given it up*, and done with it,” added Laddie, as if the idea of anything different was too hopeless to be considered.

“Oh, but Laddie dear, you ’ve no idea how cleverly those little Italians—little boys no larger than you, and some even smaller, I remember—managed to catch the coins in their mouths, their hands, and even in their *toes*. The men were n’t one bit quicker at it than those little boys, and the little chaps, in fact, could cut more capers in the water than the men. They would dive from their little boats, and sink deeply in the water, and come up laughing and shouting only to turn summersaults backwards and forwards, and jump and squirm and frolic in such ways as kept us laughing all the time, and then they would swim about the steamer holding up their brown little hands, and say, imploringly, ‘Mon-ie! mon-ie!’ and they’d get it, too, the little rogues!”

“Go on, Auntie!” requested Laddie, when his auntie paused for a minute’s rest. “Go on, ’cause you’ll be looking at the clock by ’n’ by, and telling us it is stopping time.”

“And we can ’t *waste* any time, you know,” put in Lassie.

“Not even for me to breathe, I suppose,” laughed Mamma. “All right. Let me see,—oh, I must tell you the funny sights we saw as we were driving to our hotel from the wharf. We saw cows and donkeys harnessed together—think of it! and plodding along the street as soberly and willingly as though they were n’t making a comical sight of themselves. A cow was sometimes harnessed in with a *horse*, and I don’t think either of them felt very happy about it. They do a great many funny things there in Naples, and have odd customs which probably will never be changed. I saw very small donkeys walking along so completely covered with bales of grass, or hay, or vegetables in hampers, or whatever their burdens chanced to be at the time, that really all I could see of the poor little animal were his legs and his great

big wagging ears, if I happened to be behind him; and if I were approaching him, I only saw a great heap of something or other with a long head and a pair of crooked, lopping ears projecting from the front of the heap."

Laddie and Lassie almost rolled out of their beds with laughing at that part of mamma's description, for she was telling it in a very funny way.

"Oh dear!" exclaimed Lassie, "I do truly hope Laddie and I can go to Eurip some day! I *must* see those queer ways! Go on, Mamma!"

"Well, I saw something queerer still one day: you'll never guess what it was, so I won't ask you to try. I saw an old woman with a red shawl on her back, and a dirty white cap with frills on the edge, helping a cow to draw a wagon. She pulled, and the cow pulled, and the wagon was so full of old furniture that it must have been heavy for both of them. But

she did n't mind helping her cow, and I think it was because she had a kind heart, and thought the little cow was n't strong. She was quite an old woman, too. But Italian women, amongst the peasant classes, are very strong, and used to work. Well, let me see what else I can think of. Oh ! one day as we were taking a drive, some little girls ran beside the carriage with beautiful roses and other flowers, and when I shook my head for 'no,' not wanting to buy any, they tossed their flowers right into my lap, and ran along beside us, coaxing in their pretty way, with their dark eyes, and gestures, — *motions*, I mean by that word, — that we would buy their sweet wares. So papa bought roses of one little girl, and I bought the posies which the child running along at *my* side of the carriage had thrown with a little laugh into my lap, and they were so happy when they caught the small Italian coin we gave

them that we enjoyed our flowers all the more."

"Go on, Auntie! Oh, what *does* make you stop a minute, when the clock keeps hurrying so with its old ticking?"

"Only one more thing, you greedy children, and then I shall bid you good-night. Dear me! I'm afraid I got into a scrape with my bed-time arrangements, didn't I? Well, how do you think the little beggar boys there used to coax for money? They used to turn 'cartwheels'—*you* know what the boys call 'cartwheels,' don't you, Laddie?"

"Oh, yes! there's a boy in my block does it sometimes, just to show off," replied Laddie eagerly. "He goes fast as anything on his hands and feet *sideways*, you know. But *I* could do it 'f I tried. Say, Lassie!"—he got up on his elbow, and looked over at Lassie's room,—“I'll do it for you to-morrow; shall I?"

"No, my boy!" interrupted Auntie,

“you’ll try no such silly thing, and be served as your ‘leap-frog’ served you. Now you’ve wasted a whole minute of story time,” glancing at the clock.

He promptly settled himself in bed again, and Auntie continued to explain that the little Italian boys turned ‘cart-wheels,’ one after the other, beside the carriage, and somersaults by the dozen, hoping to win reward for their performances in the shape of money, and as soon as they got what they wanted from one carriage, they would watch for another and go over the whole tiresome fun again. “And now,” she said, “here’s a hug and a kiss from me, and I want to be rewarded for them and for my story by the shutting of your eyes, and your trip off to ‘slumberland’ in half of a jiffy!”





CHAPTER XII

FARMER JONES AGAIN

What do you love the summer for,
Dear, happy children? can you tell
Why little people far and near
Love the sweet summer time so well?

Why do we love the summer? Oh!
Because with it all sweet things grow
Because it brings us birds and flowers,
And dear, delightful, golden hours;
And fair blue skies, and merry breeze,
And leaves that rustle on the trees;
And buttercups, and daisies sweet,
Pink clover tops, and 'neath our feet
The softest, greenest grass, where grows
The dainty fern. And many a rose
Beside the wayside hedge in bloom
Fills all the air with sweet perfume!
We're glad to see the butterflies,

Yellow as sunshine from the skies;
We're glad of all the summer brings,
Its mountain-brooks, and meadow-springs;
We're glad of every joyous day
From early dawn to twilight gray.
Oh, *that* is why we love it well!
And half its joys we cannot tell!

That is the way all little people would answer those who might ask why they love the summer-time, don't you think so? At any rate, it is the way Laddie and Lassie were feeling, a day or two after our last chapter, as they were returning from the post-office with a letter for Auntie, and singing along the way like little birds.

Presently they heard a voice behind them singing out in a jolly sort of way,—though to be sure it was not a sweet, soft voice, and there wasn't any real music in it,—“Hey diddle, ho diddle, hi diddle-dee, fiddle-dum, faddle-dum, fido-dum-fee!”

The children turned around, and there was dear old Farmer Jones, driving, this time, in an *empty* cart.

“ Oh, hello, hello ! ” he cried, while his eyes were “ full of laugh,” as Laddie had once expressed it. “ We keep comin’ acrost each other, don’t we, eh ? Wal’, *I’ve* no sort of objection to it, have you ? ”

“ The *idea* ! ” exclaimed Lassie, with a great deal of emphasis; “ as if we were n’t glad to see you ! such a nice, kind man as you, too ! ”

Farmer Jones threw back his head and gave a hearty laugh, while Laddie and Lassie were climbing up beside him, taking it for granted they were wanted, you see.

“ Wal’ there now,” he said, “ I dunno when I’ve had a compliment like that before ! I’m a ‘ nice, kind man,’ am I ? I’ll have to hold on to that reputation, Miss Lassie.”

He started his horse with a click of

the tongue and a slap of the reins, and told the children he was going to the fields for another load of hay. Then they wanted to know how far he had taken the girls and boys who had climbed on his hay the other morning, when he had given them (Lassie and Laddie) the ride to the post-office? He told them he had not gone very far before he was obliged to dump his human load, because they got to cutting up so that he nearly lost the whole concern overboard, boys, girls, and the load of hay. So he had put them off in short order, and he guessed *next* time they'd behave better.

Laddie looked a little sober, and whispered to Lassie, who also looked as though she was having an anxious thought.

Mr. Jones turned around in time to see the little heads bent together, and asked what was wrong. "I've always noticed," said he with a pretence of great

seriousness, "that where there's *whisperin'*, there's *always somethin' said!* an' if 't ain't askin' too much, I'd like to hear what's troublin' ye."

Laddie looked up in confusion, but the old farmer didn't look as sober as he tried to make his voice, so the children took courage, and Laddie explained that he had suddenly had a "*beautiful* idea" come to him, and he was just going to tell it to Mr. Jones, when he heard how the children had acted in the hay-cart, and it made him afraid to tell his idea, for fear the farmer would n't like it, so he had whispered his idea and his fears to Lassie, and they were just thinking how to manage about it: that was all.

Farmer Jones made a funny little chuckle in his throat. "Tell it out, sonny! let's have that idee on the spot."

"Well, it was like this," said Laddie, and then he told about the "Fresh-air" children at Mrs. Spencer's house, and of

all she had told him about the poor little city girls and boys who were not happy, but very miserable in their poor houses in hot city streets. Laddie told it all in his pretty, boyish little way, and eager little Lassie helped him, while the kind old farmer put in his “wanter know!” and “you don’t tell me!” every now and then, with an air of interest and sympathy very gratifying to Lassie and Laddie.

“And so,” continued Laddie, “I thought all of a sudden, that maybe — just *maybe* you know — you would let those poor little girls and boys who have to be Fresh-air’s ’n’ don’t have good times at home, you know — maybe, you would some day give ’em a nice hay-cart ride, like the one we had, only ——”

“Only lots longer!” interrupted Lassie, who really could n’t wait another minute for her turn to come in the discussion.

“Yes, lots longer. I was just that very

instant minute going to say that, Lassie Kearney," he said, a little crossly.

The farmer laid his big hand on Laddie's head. "Your idee is 'bout as good an idee as I ever heard," he replied, "an' I 'm with ye in it, sonny, with all my heart. Land o' goshen ! but you two do beat all for bein' the cunningest critters of all the humans I ever see before. G' long Dobbin, old nag !"

He gave his old horse a gentle tap with the reins, and then he and the children planned when to give the little "Freshairs" their delightful surprise.

Everything was arranged by the time the Kearney cottage was reached, and two very much delighted children scampered off to find the dear Mamma who was always sure to be interested in whatever news her little couple had to relate. Of course she was as pleased at the idea of a hay-ride for the children at Mrs. Spencer's as Laddie and Lassie and Farmer

Jones were, and equally, of course, she volunteered to make some delicious peanut taffy and send it to the children to enjoy on their hay-ride. And for that offer of hers she had to submit to the usual reward from two pairs of impulsive little arms, and little squeaks of pleasure from two throats, which were not so musical as energetic.

“When did you say the grand affair is to come off?” she asked.

“To-morrow, Mamma darling!” replied Lassie, “to-morrow in the sunniest part of the day, right after dinner; and Laddie and I have got to hurry off straight after breakfast to tell Mrs. Spencer, and ——”

“But, my dear,” interrupted Mamma, “don’t you think you should find out first from Mrs. Spencer whether she is *willing* the children should go to-morrow? You seem to be counting *her* out of the matter entirely.”

“O Auntie Kearney!” cried Laddie,

“you might be ’most sure that such a kind lady as she is would just be *derlighted* to have ’em have such a beautiful time. *Course* she’ll be willing when we ’splain everything so nicely to her! Say, Auntie dear, don’t you think you ought to be hurrying up ’bout that taffy?”

“Well, I think I need n’t rush at it this minute,” laughed his Auntie, “as I’ll have plenty of time in the morning.”

“You know, Mamma,” put in Lassie a little anxiously, “you’ll have to make a big lot of it, so you must n’t waste *too* much time ’fore you begin!”

“Run away, midgets, both of you, do, and let me read my letter,” was her reply, and the children ran out to the kitchen to tell Sally all the good news, and then they ran as fast as they could to the broad green meadow opposite the house, where their daily frolics and games of “tag” and “I spy,” and various other games dear to the heart of little folks, were en-

joyed in entire freedom, and no one near to tell them “don’t be so noisy.”

A little later, when Mamma looked out of her window, she beheld her children seated side by side upon the stone wall, singing to music of their own composition as many nursery rhymes as they could think of, and their little shrill voices soared away on the breezes so merrily that her heart went singing after them.





CHAPTER XIII

ANOTHER BED-TIME STORY

“**N**OW it’s my turn again,” said Lassie, when, at the usual time, she and Laddie were ready for the bed-time story, and the large envelope was in Mamma’s hand.

“Yes, it is your turn, dear ; pull carefully, for we don’t want to tear this envelope, do we ?”

“What you got, Lass ?” asked Laddie.

“Oh ! a lovely *hilly* picture !” was her reply. Mamma smiled and carried the photograph over to Laddie.

He saw a pretty scene indeed,—a Swiss village surrounded by high mountains, and at the foot of those mountains a little



SWISS VILLAGE.

stream of blue water, and green meadows stretching upward along the hillsides ; and a number of little queerly shaped houses nestling together here and there on the hills ; and in the foreground of the picture some women working in the fields, and men with pitchforks ; and in the distance cows and goats were feeding and having a good time in the meadows.

After they had each enjoyed a good look at the photograph, Laddie and Lassie lay down again and fixed themselves comfortably for the hearing of Mamma's description of it.

“It was very beautiful while we were in Switzerland,” she began, “and this is only one of its little villages. I bought it because of its beauty, though we only passed through it on a coaching trip. We have to go from one place to another in those Swiss mountains by *coach* very often, as railroads are not built in the *very* mountainous parts of the country, and so papa

and I were enabled to enjoy a great many lovely drives through beautiful scenery we could not have seen otherwise. Well, those women you see there working away so hard are helping their husbands and sons about the hay, you know. Women work in the fields as often, and sometimes at as *hard* toil, as the men themselves, and they would call us in our country very lazy if they could see our women doing only the *easy* part of work, and having such comfortable times as we do here."

"Yes, but Auntie, lots of women have to work in New York. I've seen 'em carrying big baskets and things, and—oh! I've seen 'em scrubbing floors, sometimes; our cleaning girl does it!"

Auntie laughed and explained the difference in the kinds of work between that in our country and amongst the peasantry in foreign countries, and Laddie and Lassie felt a great deal of sympathy for the foreigners, of course.

“Oh, they don’t mind it,” said Auntie; “they are so used to it from their tiny childhood that they would not be really happy unless they could live out-of-doors in the freedom of sun and wind and do their share of farm work. We saw some funny sights in the Swiss fields we passed. We once saw a field full of men and women, and a number of haymows. Presently three or four of those haymows began to walk across the field, and when they reached a big barn one of them actually climbed a tall ladder, which reached from the ground to an open window at the top of the barn, and poked itself into the window at last. And *then* I found out that what had been a bale of hay had somehow turned into a *man*, for he came down that ladder on the jump and gave the other bales of hay (waiting, each of them, a turn) a chance to go up and turn into a man also.”

Lassie’s eyes, as well as Laddie’s, had

been growing wider and wider open with astonishment during this part of mamma's story, but just as Laddie was about to ask if she was telling them a "right-down make-believe fairy story," Lassie saw the little laugh around Mamma's mouth, and she understood in a minute that those walking haymows were only men who had carried so large a load on their shoulders that their bodies had been completely hidden from view. And Mamma laughingly explained that it was really so. By carrying on their shoulders and backs, and on the pitchfork as well, as large a load of hay as could be gathered from the field, each man really appeared to be a moving and waddling haymow, and the sight was most comical to any one looking on.

"Don't they have big wagons to pile the hay in?" asked Lassie.

"Not in that part of the country, I think," replied Mamma. "The men and the women are their own hay-carts — and

very good ones they are, too. The Swiss are a happy, contented people, and they love to sing their own merry songs and ‘*yodels*’ through the valleys and from the hillsides as they drive their sheep and cows and their herds of goats to and from the pastures.”

“What’s a ‘*yodel*,’ Auntie?” from Laddie.

“What a funny name!” from Lassie.

“A ‘*yodel*’ is a musical call, or song, which is, I believe, only heard in Switzerland,—or rather I should say, instead, belongs in its *origin* to Switzerland,—and the singer has a way of breaking his voice into echoes which fly about like *invisible birds*, as I used to say to Papa, and make a most fascinating combination of sounds. I really don’t know how to describe it to you children, but you must be content to know that a ‘*yodel*’ is—a ‘*yodel*,’ and that is all the description *I* know how to give. Well, sometimes when Papa and I

would be walking about the roads, high up the mountainsides, and would stop here and there to look down upon the beautiful valley scenes below, we could hear the faint, sweet echoes of the '*yodels*' as they floated up from the valley, and we knew the peasants were calling their flocks, and to each other, or, lying stretched out at their ease in some sunny little nook, were amusing themselves and passing away the time by singing and sending their merry echoes around the hillsides. I used to linger long to hear the yodeling, and it sometimes seems as though I can hear those sweet echoes even yet, after all the years.

“Another thing I used to like to listen to, and that was the morning and evening music of the cow-bells. Early in the morning, as I lay in bed in the little Swiss hotel, and long before it was time for me to be up and dressing, I could hear, at first, a faint, musical sound which did n't

seem like a tune, but more like scales running up and down, as you 've heard me do on the piano. Then little by little the music would become a tinkle-tinkle-tinkle, growing clearer and more distinct, and finally singing me the song of cow-bells, and I knew the cows, perhaps ten or twelve, and often more than that, were coming down the road to the pastures beneath the hills, and as the tones and sizes of the bells were different, of course they gave out a *musical* sort of jangle, not at all unpleasant to *my* ears, and quite a welcome sound in fact, though papa, Lassie, used to say he thought there was more noise than music about it, because you see, he did n't enjoy losing his second morning nap. Well, at five o'clock every afternoon, I could hear the same distant tinkling echoes again, and little by little the sound grew into the same musical scales, and then turned into cow-bells, jangling, dangling, and swinging

with the slow, plodding gait of the dear old cows coming home to their milking yards, while the cowboys plodded behind, whistling or yodelling merrily along the way. There now, look at that clock! I must stop short right here, and—here's a good-night kiss, my bonny Laddie, and—here's another, my bonny Lassie. Good-night—sweet dreams!" and away went mamma in a hurry, as the maid Sally announced a caller who was waiting below.





CHAPTER XIV

FUN FOR THE "FRESH-AIRS"

THE next morning saw Mamma making her promised candy over the kitchen fire, helped by Sally, who adored all children, and Lassie and Laddie especially.

Our little couple had started right after breakfast for Mrs. Spencer's house, to unfold to her the wonderful plan of the "fun for the 'Fresh-airs,'" and as the day itself was about as perfect as a day could possibly be made, it was hoped that everything would go smoothly. Of course Laddie and Lassie were going on the hay-ride also, and were counting on a jolly good time, and they had generously decided *not* to eat the leastest little bit of

the candy themselves, but to let the "Fresh-airs" have every single bit of it.

"I 'm having such a be-*yew*tiful time here being your birthday present !" said Laddie, as he skipped along the way, while Lassie kept beside him on her dancing little feet, and their clasped hands were swinging to and fro in time to the singing of their little hearts.

"So 'm I !" replied Lassie, "and it does seem 's if it keeps growing more beautiful every day !"

Well, they reached Mrs. Spencer's gate at last, and there were the "Fresh-airs," playing about on the grass and having such a good time that they did n't notice when our little folks went up to the porch. Mrs. Spencer was very glad to see them, and listened with pleasure to their plan concerning the hay ride. She thanked the little cousins for their generous desire to make her "Fresh-airs" happy, and she told them to be sure and thank Mamma,

for *her*, for troubling to make the candy for her little guests and thus add to the afternoon's pleasure.

Then Lassie and Laddie started home again, after he had politely lifted his little cap to Mrs. Spencer and thanked her for liking the plan so much. As they went by the group of children near the gate, one of them, recognizing Laddie, called out, "Hello!" and Laddie looking back replied, "Hello, back again! Say, boy, you and the rest of you Fresh-airers are going to have a jolly time this afternoon. Hi! won't you like the fun!"

With that the children came running towards Laddie, and asking questions, but he said he could n't tell them then, "'cause they must be *s'prised* at the good time when it came," and then he and Lassie ran down the road as fast as they could.

When they reached home the peanut taffy was all made, and cooling in the big pans in the ice-chest, and Mamma

was quietly darning a frayed place in a pair of Laddie's little trousers.

"O Auntie, Auntie!" cried he gleefully, "*she* thinks it's going to be fun, too, Mrs. Spencer does; and she says to thank you for her, 'cause of your *candy*, and—and it's good for the 'Fresh-airs'! hurrah!"

When dinner was finished, Lassie and Laddie perched themselves in their favorite positions on the gate-posts, and watched for Mr. Jones. It was half-past one o'clock, and the sun was doing its best to honor the occasion, by glimmering about, chasing the shadows, and dancing under the trees like tiny golden fairies. It was n't a bit *too* warm a day, but just warm enough to make one love the summer-time, you know, and Farmer Jones came along in due time, with his hay-wagon full to overflowing with hay, and his big heart full to the brim with good nature and kindliness.

"All ready, eh?" he said; "all aboard then, and—Oh, how do, ma'am,"—waving his hand to Mrs. Kearney, who came down to the gate with the box of candy neatly tied.

"You're doing a very kind thing, Mr. Jones," she said, with a smile, as she stooped to kiss her little folks good-bye. "I think it will be a treat of pleasure which those little city waifs will not soon forget. I'm sure they will vote you thanks and cheers at the close of the afternoon."

The farmer smiled. "Sho now," he said, "I like fun as much as the youngsters, an' I ain't got a thing on hand I'd like better to do than please these 'ere little folks o' yourn to-day."

So with a wave of their hands and shouts of joy from Laddie and Lassie, they started on their good time.

The farmer had put his yoke of oxen before the hay-wagon this time, instead of

old Dobbin, and the children soon learned to call "haw," and "gee," just as he did, as the big brown creatures plodded clumsily along over the uneven road. Every now and then a rough jolt of the cart would pitch the children about in the hay, but that only added to the fun of the ride, even when once Laddie went sliding gently over the back of the cart, enveloped in a nest of hay, and landed on his back in the middle of the road, not one bit the worse for his experience.

Well, by the time the Spencer cottage was reached, behold! all the little "Fresh-airers" were gathered at the gate, and waiting the arrival of the wagon.

They had never before known the joys of a real country hay-ride, and they were not slow in clambering into that pile of hay you may be sure.

But alas! when they were all in, it seemed too crowded for complete comfort, so after a moment of quiet thought little

Lassie jumped down to the ground, and of course Laddie speedily followed.

"What yer gittin' out for?" cried the farmer, who would rather have been overcrowded than have his favorites stay behind.

"Lassie says it's too full!" replied Laddie, "'n' I won't go if *she* does n't."

"We don't mind!" piped Lassie, with a little tone of disappointment in her voice she could n't hide, "'cause we can go any time, you know!"

Laddie was not so ready to give up his ride as he knew he ought to be, but he felt that he must stand by his little cousin in all things, and so he swallowed a lump in his throat, while he cried, "Hurrah for the Fresh-airers, and the hay-ride! and hurrah for Farmer Jones!"

The group of little ones in the hay-cart declared there *was* room enough, and the good old farmer scolded because he could n't have his little chums with him.

But it was such a small wagon, and it really was full of human freight already, as Mrs. Spencer could see, and she agreed that Lassie was doing right, and Laddie, too. So the children on the hay and the children on the ground cried good-bye to each other. To be sure, Lassie had a few little tears to be winked off her lashes, and Laddie had an uncomfortable feeling in his throat that he had to swallow, but when Mrs. Spencer presently called to them that she had found another "Fresh-air" rhyme amongst some scrap-book clippings, which she would read to them if they cared to hear it, they turned around with sweet little faces all clear and sunny again, and ran to sit beside her on the porch.

"Mamma reads things to us this way," said Lassie, "sometimes. It sounds good to hear reading out on piazzas, and—O Laddie Lee!" turning suddenly to the little boy—"are n't you dreadfully'shamed?

We have n't once remembered to tell Mrs. Spencer how we liked that nice rhyme she gave us the other day !"

"I 'm glad you liked it, dearies," said Mrs. Spencer ; "and now listen, and see if you don't like this one even better, for *this* is a little story in rhyme."

THE LITTLE GIRL OF THE FRESH-AIR FUND

It was little she knew of the sweet green grass

And the wonderful wealth of clover

Which, far away from the city's streets,

Were spreading the broad fields over.

Yet blue her eyes as the summer skies,

And as sunny her tangled hair

As the goldenest sunbeam ever sent

To lie on the earth so fair.

What wonder she opened her blue eyes wide

When she learned one happy day

That she and many a child beside

Were to travel far away—

"To the fairy-land where daisies grew,

And the roads were soft and green! "

What wonder her heart o'erflowed with joy,

For the glad thing to be seen!

Old Farmer John on the platform stood
When the train came in at last,
And the "waif" *he* was going to keep awhile,
He held in his strong arms fast.
"For it's never a chick nor child have I,"
Said he to the agent then,
"An' jest as true as the skies are blue,
I'll be good to this gal! Amen!"

So he carried her home to his pleasant farm,
And he—*turned her out to grass*—
With a kiss and a laugh. And the sun and wind
Made free with the little lass,
And kissed her cheeks till they blushed as red
As the reddest rose that grew;
And fun and mischief at last peeped out
From the *once sad* eyes of blue.

"Dear Friend," said a letter from Farmer John,
"There's no two ways about it;
This farm's got used to this wee gal's laugh,
And it jest can't live without it.
Why, bless yer soul! it would do ye good
To watch the chick each day
A-turnin' the old place upside down
Along of her happy play!
An' me an' my wife, we don't see how
There's anythin' else to do

But jest hold on to the leetle gal,
 An' keep her fer good an' true.
 An' I reckon the blessèd child that lives
 With the angels in the skies
 Won't mind if this leetle new one stays
 To wipe the tears from our eyes.
 And the mother who died an' left *this* gal
 Perhaps, in the angel-land,
 Will find *my* little one, and be glad,
 A-watchin' *us*, hand in hand.
 So now, whatever there is to do,
 Jest write it fer me to sign;
 An' may Heaven keep blessin' the 'Fresh-Air
 Fund,'
 An' *your* work as well as mine."

"Now, what do you think of that?"
 asked Mrs. Spencer, smiling, as she
 watched the earnest little faces turned up
 to her.

"Why! it seems the loveliest thing in
 the world for that nice old farmer to keep
 that little girl," exclaimed Lassie, "and it
 is such a nice rhyme-story I — I wish my
 dear Mamma could read it."

"Your dear Mamma *shall* read it, dearie,

and I'll make the clipping a present to you now, to take home with you."

"And — and the little girl did n't have to go back to the hot places in the city any more, did she?" said Laddie; "and she could be just the same as though she were the farmer's real own little girl, and he — he knew the little girl that had *really* been his and had died would be glad the other little girl was going to keep him from being lonely?"

"Yes, darling, that was so, and I should n't wonder if a great many kind people all over the world were doing the same kind thing that Farmer John did. Now let us go out and see the goldfish in the little pond behind the house; don't you want to?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied Laddie; but he seemed to be thinking about something very intently, for his little face was serious, and he got up from his seat slowly. Presently he said, "I s'pose *ladies* can do

so, too, if they 're lonely and — and — if they 've lost little boys?"

Mrs. Spencer clasped Laddie's hand tightly. "You are thinking of *me*, Laddie, are n't you? Yes, a great many ladies adopt children for their own; but it is n't always possible, and there are a great many things to be considered before one takes such a step. *I* must help the little ones to be happy in other ways, and after this I shall always hope to have some children here at times during the summer, and give them as good a time as possible. See! there goes our Lassie, running way ahead of us; let us see if we can reach the pond first!"





CHAPTER XV

LADDIE'S "FLY-AWAY DAY"

THE "hay-riders" had returned before Laddie and Lassie were ready to leave Mrs. Spencer's house, so the farmer—loaded down with thanks from the little Fresh-airs, and their ringing chorus of *cheers* for him (which I suspect the lady had suggested to the children)—had tossed our little cousins on top of his load, and started up the road towards the Kearney cottage. He had told them how the "Fresh-airs" had enjoyed and made away with the candy, and how he himself had "done some pretty fair sampling of it, an' found it 'bout as tasty eatin' as he 'd ever tried." And he told them all the

particulars of the ride, and made them shout with laughter when he described a funny mishap that had befallen little Sammy, one of the brightest of the group, and indeed the farmer's favorite of them all. Little Sammy had once seen a circus parade in the streets of the city, and his admiration for the man who had ridden two horses at a time, standing on their backs, had been unbounded at the time of his seeing it, and had continued to linger in his memory. So in the fulness of his fun on the hay-ride, at a moment when Mr. Jones had left the cart just for an instant, the little rogue had let himself down to the tongue of the cart, and calling upon the other children to "jes' watch an' see what *he* could do!" he had climbed upon the back of one of the oxen, and then with much effort had succeeded in standing with one foot upon each animal. So far all was well for Sammy, but when presently the oxen moved restlessly, each

a little apart from the other, Sammy, of course, with a cry that had no fun in it, slipped between the oxen, and if it had not been that he brought up astride of the tongue of the cart he might have fared badly. As it was, he bumped himself pretty sorely, and was glad to be lifted by Farmer Jones back to his soft nest in the hay again, while the children laughed at and made fun of him teasingly.

The farmer had told this in such a funny way that it made great fun for Laddie and Lassie, and they stored it away with other good things to relate to the mamma at home, who had no idea — of course — that her own little people had missed their anticipated pleasure after all. She would be very sorry, they knew, when she learned of their disappointment.

“We need n’t tell her, you know,” suggested Laddie, “and then she won’t feel badly.”

“Why, Laddie Lee!” exclaimed Lassie,

surprised; "I always tell Mamma my sorrowful things same as my glad things, and—and it 's nice to be comforted by her, you see. So I shall tell her all 'bout our not going on the hay-ride."

"All right," said Laddie; "and now let 's show Mr. Jones that rhyme Mrs. Spencer gave us."

The farmer read it, and liked it so much that he read it again, and pronounced it "an all 'round good thing!" with an emphasis which pleased the children, and Laddie declared that "when *he* was a man, he would keep a 'Fresh-air,' too."

Then the cottage was reached, and it was n't long before the day had slipped away and hidden itself in the soft evening shadows. The children had been deprived of their story at bedtime, which was even more of a disappointment to them, I think, than the loss of the hay-ride had been. But some friends had called on Mamma, and so, of

course, there had been no time for the story.

And now another day had come, and the breakfast was over and Laddie sat rather disconsolately and all by himself on the top step of the piazza. His elbows were on his knees and his chin was hidden in the palms of his hands, while a little frown had puckered his forehead in an unusual way for fully ten minutes.

What was the matter with Laddie? Why, poor little Lassie, for a great wonder, had a headache that morning, and mamma thought a good rest in her shady little room, with a wet bandage on the little aching head, would surely bring relief by dinner-time. So Laddie was wondering what kind of play would seem the *right* kind without his Lassie to help him enjoy it. Thus far he had tried tossing ball, and swinging on the low apple-tree bough across the road; and he had tried to see how many times he could jump

over a rather wide little brook which ran along through the big meadow near by. He had never thought to try that before, somehow, and he meant to tell Lassie by and by what fun it was. But alas! at the very first effort his feet slipped from the opposite bank and down went Laddie into the brook, getting shoes and stockings so wet that he had to go to Auntie and be made comfortable again.

So it had seemed really hopeless to even try and be happy without Lassie, and that was why he was found by his Auntie sitting so disconsolately on the piazza step, when presently she came out of the house and began to attend to her vines, which were climbing about so prettily over the trellis.

"Can't you find anything to do, dearie?" she asked.

"Oh, *that* is n't it!" was the reply. "There 's lots to do, only I sha' n't do 'em one bit 'thout Lassie! That 's the

worstest of being girls ; they have headaches ! ”

Auntie laughed. “ Maybe boys have them, too, if you knew all about it,” she said. “ Does n’t Papa sometimes complain of a headache, as well as Mamma, Laddie boy ? ”

“ Ye-es,” agreed Laddie reluctantly, “ but I guess girls have ’em *more* than boys. What *did* make Lassie have one to-day, Auntie, do you s’pose ? ”

“ Too much playing in the sun, perhaps, for the last few days. But, cheer up, dear, it will soon pass away, and very likely by afternoon Lassie will be her bright little self again. Can’t you take a run to the post-office for Auntie and see if it won’t help time fly a little faster ? ”

“ Go all that way ’thout *Lassie* ? ” exclaimed the little boy in surprise, the frown growing deeper between his eyes. “ O Auntie ! ”

“ Not unless you want to, darling ; but if you should happen to feel like it, there ’s

a letter on the hall table that you can post for me, dear."

Then she went on with her work, picking off a dead leaf here and there and fastening up a straying vine-tendrill, while Laddie watched her gloomily a few moments and then got up and went into the house and up the staircase softly. Auntie knew he would not make any noise; she could trust Laddie for that, even though it was plain to be seen that he was rather a cross little Laddie just then—such an *unusual* thing that she was sure it would n't last long.

Meantime, Laddie tiptoed softly to the door of Lassie's little room and peeped in anxiously. There lay Lassie sound asleep, with the wet bandage on her forehead and her sunny hair in all directions about the pillow. Her dear little face looked pale, and a grieved expression about the drooping little mouth told of her having had a pretty hard time with the poor head.

Laddie was greatly troubled and full of sympathy. So much sympathy, in fact, that it completely drove out of him every atom of crossness that had betrayed itself shortly before. He looked at his dear little sleeping cousin and shook his head.

“No! she *won't* be her bright little self by afternoon at all, for all Auntie b'lieves so! But—Lassie has got a real true headache, sure 'nough, 'cause she would n't be wasting time from play, if she had n't.”

Then he went down-stairs, saw Auntie's letter lying on the table, felt ashamed to think he had n't been willing to go to the post-office, and, putting it in his pocket, decided to surprise Auntie; so running through the kitchen, went by the back path to the main road, and started for the post-office in a better frame of mind, after all.

To be sure the walk was lonely without Lassie, and when he passed the place where the cross old gobbler lived, he ran

like the wind, because he did n't feel quite so brave without Lassie as when with her, right on that especial spot.

But Mr. Gobbler was nowhere about, so Laddie went on his way in peace.

The letter was mailed, and Laddie started home again. He did n't want to *hurry*, because there was no use getting home so soon while Lassie was in bed and could n't have fun with him. So he loitered along the way, and when he saw some big boys—so big that they were almost men—doing something with a kite, in a distant field, he had the curiosity to climb over the stone wall and run in their direction. He thought it was queer for such big fellows to be playing with kites, just as though they were little boys, and he wondered why they all took hold of it at once.

When he reached them, he opened his eyes wide as saucers, and not only said "*Gee!*" but added "*Whoopee!*" to it so

loudly that the young men looked at him with a laugh.

“Never saw such a big kite before, eh, youngster?” said one of them. And Laddie shyly acknowledged that he never, never had! And no wonder he was surprised. The kite was so large that if it had been hung upon the door of his auntie’s woodshed, he was positive it would have covered nearly all of the door, and I think Laddie was about right. It was a *very* large kite, and was made of cloth—*cotton* cloth, I mean to say,—and its tail was so long that it looked like a great snake trailing about on the ground. Laddie looked at the kite with great respect and admiration, and longed to see it fly.

Presently the young men sent it up, after some little trouble, and oh! how that big kite pulled and tugged at the string as the young man who held it called to a companion to help him.

It was a fine sight for little Laddie,

who had seen only the small kites which the youngsters in his neighborhood at home had played with sometimes. He could n't really believe, though, in spite of what he saw, that it was necessary for *two* people to hold that string, and he just wished *he* "could have a try at it." His chance for a "try" came soon, for the young men tied the kite-string to a tree, and, asking Laddie if he would mind keeping an eye upon it, they went off to get something from a shed near by. Laddie was delighted, and you may be sure he did n't wait a moment after their backs were turned before he ran to that tree and tried to unfasten the kite-string.

While the young men were hunting for what they wanted to find in the shed, Laddie succeeding in freeing the string from the tree, and took a good hold of the thick piece of wood which was fastened to it.

But whatever pleasure he had expected

to gain from his "try at it" was speedily lost in the fright he experienced when the big kite at once lifted the little fellow's light weight from the ground, and pulled him helplessly along.

It was fortunate for Laddie that the owners of the kite were just then returning from the shed, for they heard his screams, and saw him being lifted from his feet, and fearing lest he might loosen his hold and get a tumble, and also fearing for the safety of their kite, you may be sure they did some swift running just then.

Laddie was too confused and frightened to dare let go of the string, or the young men would have seen their kite soaring away in its sudden freedom far beyond their reach, sure enough. He held on to the piece of wood which secured the stout cord with a clutch that saved him from a tumble, but his little kicking feet were rising higher above the ground with every second of time, and when the young men



THE "FLY-AWAY DAY."

reached him they had to pull him down by his legs.

Do you wonder that Laddie was so frightened that the very moment he felt himself upon firm earth again he sank down in a forlorn little heap and began to cry, not even caring who might think him a "girl-boy"?

"There, little man, don't cry," said one of the kite owners, patting Laddie's shoulder, "and be thankful we were near to pull you down, my small chap."

"You might have flown up to the sun, you know," laughed another.

"And then your daddy would have had to pay us for the loss of our kite," another said, with a laugh in his eyes.

But Laddie did n't see any joke in the matter. He drew his arm across his eyes, and drew also a very long breath, and finally exclaimed:

"I hate — I just *hate* such big old kites! and I think, I do! that you're meaner'n

mean, to make fun of a little boy who only wanted just to have a try at your kite!" Then he got up, and ran as fast as his trembling little limbs would carry him, across the field to the stone wall by the road. There he sat down to rest, and get quite through with tears, and to watch, from his safe distance, the way that kite shot up to the clouds and wagged its long tail, as the strong hands of the young men held the string.

"It's been a sort of fly-away day," thought he, as he at last slipped over the wall and turned his steps homeward. "A reg'lar *fly-away day* and no mistake! but *whiz!* was n't I scared!"

Well, the consolation of it all was that he would have a brand new and startling tale to relate to Auntie and Lassie, and he thought Lassie would be "sorry she went and had a headache and missed all the fun."

But then, if Lassie had *not* had that

headache, Laddie would not, in all probability, have been farther away from home than the distance of the meadow over the way, where he and his little cousin were fond of playing at their own sweet little wills, and where they, and the bees, and the butterflies, and the birdies as well, yes, and the sunbeams and the breezes, had everything just exactly as they wanted it, and not even *Mamma* ventured to interfere.

So Laddie felt that, after all, Lassie's headache had been rather a good thing for him, because it had brought about, you understand, this new and wonderful experience, which was all his very own funny time, and he would have the telling of it all himself, "'thout Lassie wanting *her* turn in telling things!"

Well, he reached home at last, and there was Lassie sitting on the porch, looking like herself again, and the headache "all gone for good."

Then you should have heard Laddie tell his story! Oh, he made a very thrilling affair of it, and pictured it just as he felt was *exactly* the case—for you see his fright had made it seem much more of a terrible matter than it really had happened to be, and he described to the horrified Lassie how it seemed as though “the kite was a great big bird, and had grabbed him in its claws,” and was flying—flying—flying up and up! and he knew he was going to bump against the clouds in a minute, and then——

“You see, Lassie, those men came and reached up high—I s’pose they stood on tippy-toe—and they caught me just in time, and—and—well, I had some *tears*, ’cause I felt so queer, and the men made me—those men were so *rude*! you can’t think—and they laughed at me, and I saw ’em wink their eyes at each other, and—I just told ’em plain as could be, that I

hated their old kite, and then I ran away : and — and, now *you* never had such a funny thing as a *fly-away day*, Lassie Kearney !”

Lassie sadly confessed that Laddie was one good time ahead of her, and she meant — but that was in her own secret thoughts — to watch out when *his* headache turn came — and *she'd* do something that would let her catch up with him.

When Auntie came along presently Laddie had to tell his tale all over, and if he had thought she would be truly surprised, he thought just right, for she certainly was, and she made a serious matter of it by making Laddie promise *never* to go off the road again when coming alone from the post-office, nor to go near strange boys in distant fields, nor be tempted to meddle with other people's affairs.

“Why, only suppose what might have

happened if that big strong kite had actually pulled you far enough from the ground to have finally let you fall! and—what if the little arm or leg had been broken! O *Laddie!*”

She ended with a kiss and a hug, and Laddie felt that never again would he be tempted to “try” things he knew nothing about, such as “leap-frog,” and “great big kites.” And Lassie said with a little giggle that—she rather guessed she did n’t want any *broken* “birthday present,” and if he *had* let go the string, and if the kite had been *high up as high*, then—oh, then her birthday present would have “gone all to smash, and be no use to her at all.”

They both giggled at that, and then Laddie ran off to get himself washed and brushed and ready for the dinner-bell when it should presently call them to the table.



CHAPTER XVI

AT THE "BED-HOUR"

THAT night there were no interruptions at the bed-hour, and Mamma produced the familiar envelope in due time.

"Now then, it is Laddie's turn," said she as she held the open envelope before him.

"Well, you've selected a scene in one of Holland's quaint cities," she continued, as Laddie held up the photograph he had drawn out.

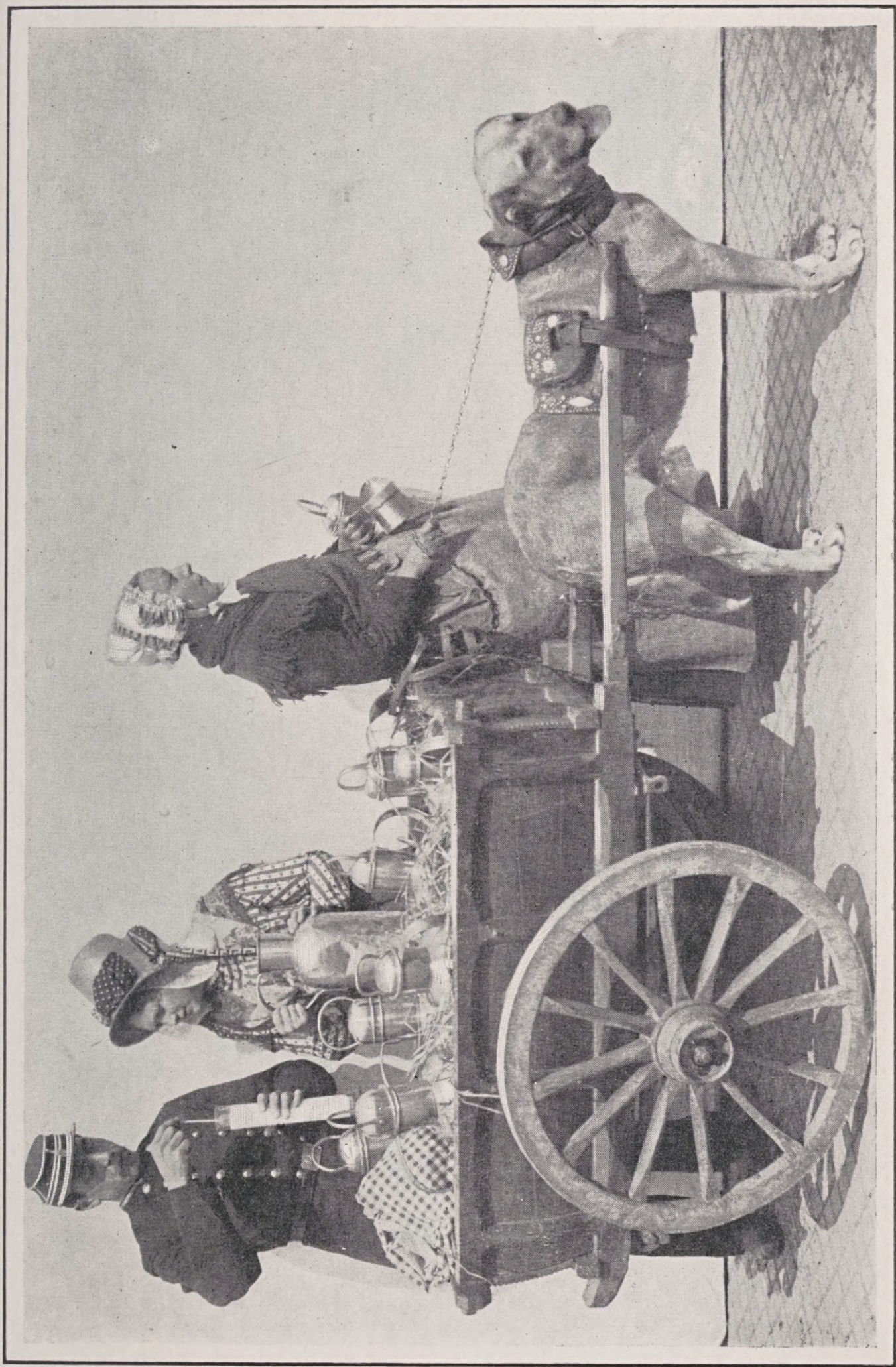
"It's got a cunning little wagon and a big nice dog for a horse," said Laddie, describing the picture for Lassie, "and a big soldier man doing something with the

wagon, and some queer women with funny caps, and —— ”

“ I want to see for my own self,” cried Lassie, sitting up in bed and holding out her hand. Mamma carried the photograph over to her.

“ Well, Mamma, it does n't look as though the Hollanders are kind people to little dogs, does it ? ” Lassie exclaimed. “ Jus' think of making little dogs drag big can wagons like that ! ”

“ There are queer customs in that little country,” replied her mother, “ and this is one of them, though it is not so cruel as you fancy. Dogs are kept busy in *useful* ways in this little Dutch city, but it does n't harm them to drag small milk-carts. You see, dear, the people are very particular about the quality of the milk they drink, and the milkmen there can't sell, or be allowed to handle at all, any milk that has been in danger of impurity in any form ; and as for *watering* the milk, as



MILK-WAGON IN HOLLAND

the dishonest milkmen in *our* cities are doing half the time, to make *quantity* serve instead of *quality* — they must have the richest and best and purest of milk for their customers, or they would have to pay a heavy fine.

"Now that man in uniform who is standing at the wagon-side is a milk inspector, and there are a number of them, too. They keep their eyes — very sharp eyes they are — open wide when they see the milk-carts going on their rounds, and they stop the milkman, or the milkwoman, and use a little instrument called a '*milk-tester*,' to see if the milk to be sold is perfectly pure. I saw a great many of those little milk-wagons in the streets, as I passed through some parts of Holland, and they were just like this in the picture. They were drawn about by a woman and a dog, sometimes, and sometimes by two little doggies trotting along contentedly, while the woman walked behind or at the

side of the cart, which carried clean, shiny milk-cans, set in as closely as possible together, as in this picture. Sometimes, too, I have seen a woman and dog harnessed together, as it were, drawing a milk-cart. They get inside of two projecting bars, with a cross-piece joining the ends, and doggie is fastened inside by straps which connect with the bars, or, as in some cases, are attached to the body of the cart, and the woman gets in beside him, and while the little dog *pulls*, the woman seems to be *pushing*, for the horizontal, or *level*, bar is pressed against her waist (and the waist of a peasant woman in Holland, I can tell you, would make two or three of your mamma's waists, Laddie). They are strong, stout, active women, and kind-hearted and pleasant, and I should n't wonder if some of those hard-worked, patient women-toilers were really smarter and better workers than their husbands.

"Well, I do not think I can tell you any more about this little picture, children, at least that would interest you, and I guess you would better shut up your little peepers and go to sleep now."

A chorus of "Oh, no's!" was the reply to that suggestion, and Mamma smiled.

"You *must* have full measure, must you, then?" she said. "But I can't do any more with this subject, so shall we draw another picture?"

"No, Mamma! that must not come out of its turn, and we want it to-morrow night. Please tell us a *make-up* story!"

"O yes, Auntie, do! *please* do!" from Laddie, "just a teenty one, 'cause truly it has n't come our sleepy-time yet."

"Dear me, children, I am not clever enough to-night to 'make-up' anything, but—wait! I'll see if I have my old scrap-book on the closet shelf; I think there are some nice little poems in it which are clippings from various papers

and magazines. . . . Ah, yes, here it is. Now if we were telling about one of the *Italian* pictures to-night, here 's a story, popping up this minute, about a little Italian boy, only the scene of the story is n't laid in Italy, you see, but in the city of Boston. Boston is *where*? Laddie, do you know, even though you are n't a real little schoolboy yet?"

"Huh! Guess I know where *that* is fast 'nough. Every little girl 'n' boy knows Boston 's a beautiful, lovely city, 'cause my Mamma's cousin Dora says so, and — and she *lives* in Boston, you know, and it 's in *Mass'choooooosetts*! Course I know."

"Right, Laddie; and now you 've finished your geography lesson, we 'll see what Beppo — that is the name of the little Italian boy — has to do with Boston, in America, instead of one of his own Italian cities. Are you ready now? Well, here 's the story about little Beppo and his dog."

BEPPO AND TONY

Beppo was a little lad from far-off Italy;
Poor and friendless, ragged, cold, and hungry, oft
was he.

Tony was young *Beppo*'s dog, large and shaggy-
haired,
And all his master's sorrows he most faithfully had
shared.

Beppo peddled pencils every day upon the street,
But his heart was oft discouraged, and weary were
his feet,

And when the evening shadows would softly fall at
last,

Full many a time down *Beppo*'s cheeks the tears
were raining fast.

Still, there came days of gladness, when *Beppo* at
his stand

Would change his wares for pennies from some
kind buyer's hand.

And people grew to know him, and give a kindly
smile

And kindly word to *Beppo*, patting *Tony*'s head
the while,

Till the doggie's eyes grew happy, and he'd wag
his bushy tail

And bark his approbation of the extra pencil sale.

There came a day, however, when the little lad
awoke

With a head that ached *so* badly ! and the words
he faintly spoke

Went ringing, oh, so loudly within his aching ears
That the little lad was frightened and faster fell
his tears.

And while he lay all helpless upon his old straw bed,
He stretched his trembling hand out to pat dog
Tony's head.

"To-morrow 'll be Thanksgivin,' old fellow," then
said he,

"An' I 'd hoped to get a taste of somethin' nice
fer you an' me.

But I can't get out to peddle, an' what are we to
do ?

For in all this great big city, *no one cares fer me
an' you !* "

Dog Tony's tail wagged slowly, he seemed to
understand

That things looked *very* doleful, as he licked his
master's hand.

Then a sudden thought had Beppo ! — " I 'll send
Tony out, and try

If *he* can sell my pencils to people passin' by !

They 'll think he looks so clever; an' none would
try to *steal*,

For Tony would n't let 'em; *he* knows how sick I
feel !

An' the people maybe 'll miss me, an' wonder if
I 'm sick,

An' perhaps they 'll feel so sorry, they 'll buy my
pencils quick."

So the little stock of pencils in a box were nicely
laid,

And round Tony's neck he tied it. "Now, doggie,
do n't be 'fraid,"

He said, while patting Tony. "An,' sec, I 'll write
a note,

An' the people they will see it a-hangin' from your
throat."

So poor Beppo printed slowly a little note, which
read—

"Deer peepul, I am sick with a bad pane in my
hed,

So Tony, *he* 'll sell pencils, an' won't you plesse to
be

So kind as to put pennies in the pencil box fer
me?"

Then he kissed his doggie's nose, and pointed to
the door,

Saying, "Tony, go sell pencils, where you 've
been with me before."

Tony seemed to comprehend, for he trotted fast
away,

To the very stand where Beppo sold his pencils
every day.

There he gravely took position, and waited pa-
tiently

Till his master's friends in passing, the little note
should see.

Well, the people laughed at Tony, and patted his
big head.

“Ho ! you *are* a clever fellow ! we *will* buy of you,”
they said.

And they bought full many a pencil they did n't
want at all,

Till dog Tony's stock kept growing, I'm glad to
say, quite small.

But—if a *naughty urchin* tried within the box to
peep,

An ugly growl from Tony made the boys at
distance keep.

And they did n't dare to linger, while Tony's teeth
were seen,

Since he knew his special business, and eyes and
ears were keen.

Well, at last the box grew heavy and dog Tony
trotted home,

Not liking from his master any longer thus to
roam.

Oh ! how the pennies jingled, as he sped with
eager feet

To the master who had trusted him with sales
upon the street !

But—not *alone* went Tony; a kind stranger followed
him,

For Beppo's plea had touched his heart, and made
his eyes grow dim;

And Beppo's eyes grew bright as Tony greeted
him once more,

And introduced the stranger as he stood within
the door.

No need to tell what followed, or what kindly
words were said

To the lonely little peddler lying there on his
straw bed.

His home was then a cellar; but a better one was
found,

And Beppo and dog Tony ceased to tramp the
streets around.

"There, how did you like that ?" asked
the dear Mamma as she closed her scrap-
book and gave her usual glance at the clock.

Lassie and Laddie thought it very fine, and secretly made up their minds to have the same sort of thing happen again very soon. Then they were kissed and hugged, and left to slumber, and Laddie confided to Lassie that he hoped he would be sure and *dream* of the boy Beppo—because he wanted to know how he and Tony looked.





CHAPTER XVII

WHAT LADDIE FOUND IN THE BUSHES

ONE day soon after this, while our little couple were skipping about their “playground” (the field which lay opposite the house) and seeing which could hop the farthest on one little leg, and after Lassie had actually hopped *two skips* more than Laddie, which brought her to a clump of bushes alongside of a fence, she heard a slight rustling in those bushes, and a branch crackled, too, in a mysterious manner. Lassie at once thought of *snakes*—as children usually do, don’t they?—and with a terrified little shriek, she dropped her other foot fast enough to the ground, and fled back towards Laddie.

“O, Laddie Lee! true 's anything, there is a snake in those bushes! I think I heard him breathing! O, Laddie, don't let 's play 'hop' any more!”

Laddie put on a bold air, being the *boy*, you see, and of course feeling that even if he *was* afraid, he was n't going to *show* it, same 's he did 'bout the gobbler.

“Pooh! I don't b'lieve it!” he said; “and you need n't be so scared, Lassie, 'cause they won't dare come over here, anyway!”

“You 're scared your own self, Laddie Lee!” replied Lassie, not appreciating her cousin's bold and fearless air, because she did n't have much faith in his courage after all. “You 're scared at snakes just as much 's *I* am!”

“All right, Miss Lassie!” replied Laddie, straightening himself like a ramrod. “You watch me!”

Lassie watched him rather anxiously,

and saw him get pretty near the bushes, and then slow up in his gait, and she knew he was losing his courage, in spite of his boast.

But suddenly Laddie gave a little run, and Lassie screamed with her fears, for there was her dearly loved little companion actually stepping into the bushes, and when he turned and called out to her, with his cheeks dimpling and his eyes flashing fun, "Say, Lassie Kearney? *am* I 'fraid? you said I was, but *am* I, now?"

She cried out admiringly, but with plenty of anxiety in her voice beside: "No! you are n't! Oh, Laddie, *do*—*do*—*do* come away from the snakes! Oh, I 'm going to call for Mamma if you don't!"

But, you see, Laddie was playing a little trick on Lassie, if only she had guessed it. He really had begun to lose courage as the distance between him and the supposed "snakes" grew less, and then, all

of a sudden, the plaintive whine of a little dog came to him from the bushes, and he knew the snake danger was over. But the spirit of mischief in him prompted him to "scare Lassie," and so he boldly went amongst the bushes, as I have said.

When our boy discovered, as he did at once, a dear little black-and-tan dog which lay on its side on the soft grass, and looked imploringly at Laddie, feebly wagging his little tail, and yet making no effort to get upon his feet, all the mischief went out of Laddie, and, running out from the bushes, he called "*Lassie*," at the top of his lungs, for she, worried little girl, was hurrying off for Mamma.

"O, Lassie — Las-seeeee!" he shouted, and she turned about at last.

"Oh, say, Lassie! come here! come here quick as anything! Here's a darling little dog!"

In a minute Lassie was flying towards the bushes, and presently stood beside the

little animal, who still made no effort to rise.

“Why does n’t he get up, I wonder,” said Laddie. “Hi! doggie! *good* doggie, come here, sir!”

He coaxed, and held out his hand, and snapped his fingers, but doggie only whined and wagged his tail.

Then Lassie went and knelt down beside the dog, and patted him lovingly, and Laddie gently turned him a little to find out what was the matter. When the children lifted one of the little slender paws, doggie flinched as though it had hurt, and then Lassie saw a cruel cut on the little foot, as though it had been run over.

“There! *that* ’s what ’s hurting him!” cried Laddie, “and he can’t get up ’cause it is so sore.”

“Let ’s take him to Mamma,” said Lassie, “for Mamma cures *everything* that hurts, you know, and she’ll be so sorry for this little doggie.”

So to Mamma went the children with their little lame pet, and it was n't long before that poor hurt paw was bathed in soothing lotions and carefully bandaged by the kind hands of that dear Mamma.

Then they began to make a "hospital" for doggie, according to Mamma's suggestion, and an old basket was found in the woodshed, which Sally lined with a soft blanket, and after doggie was laid comfortably upon a sofa cushion which could be spared for the purpose, the basket was placed in a cosy corner of the woodshed and the location named the "Hospital" by Lassie and Laddie. The sides of the basket were very low, and if at any time doggie felt like getting out of it he could easily do so.

And now came the questions: "How do you s'pose he got in those bushes, Mamma?" and "How do you s'pose he hurt his little foot, Auntie?"

To both of those questions Mamma



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could only give a suggestion that probably the dog had had his foot run over, or had cut it with a piece of sharp stone, and had managed to crawl through the rail fence which separated the bushes from the road around the corner (the main roadway made a turn just below the Kearney cottage and passed along by that clump of bushes), and then its foot had hurt so that the poor little animal had not been able to get any farther, but just tumbled down in that soft, cool shady spot and waited for somebody to come along.

“That is only guess-work, dears,” added Mamma, “but I can’t imagine any other explanation.”

“Can’t we keep him, Auntie?”—from Laddie—“’cause you know we don’t know where he lives, and he might get hurt again.”

“But, Laddie, it will not be right for us not to try and find out who owns the

pretty little fellow, you know; and no doubt he belongs to one of the hotel guests. You and Lassie must go to the post-office after dinner and ask Mr. Clark to put up a notice which I will write, telling of the finding of a dog, which the owner can have by describing it and *proving* his ownership. In that way doggie won't be claimed by somebody who has no right to him, and the *real* owner will soon be found."

The children were a little disappointed over the idea of having to part with their pet, but they knew perfectly well how they would feel themselves if doggie were their "truly own" and somebody else found and kept it from them. So after dinner they started off with Mamma's notice, and Mr. Clark tacked it up in a very conspicuous place in the office.

It was rather cheering to the children, though, when he said that "he had n't heard of any dog being lost, and he

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guessed he *would* have heard if any one round Whitford had lost one." They hoped it would happen that the little dog might after all stay with them, and Lassie said to Laddie that if Mamma had chicken for dinner the next day she was going to pull the *wishbone* with him, and they must both make the same wish that *nobody would claim* that dear lame dog.

Well, I can't tell you how many times during the rest of that day the "Hospital" was visited by our little pair of anxious nurses.

Mamma, too, went often to look at the little foot, to see that the bandage was still on comfortably and to wet it again with the cooling witch hazel.

And such a grateful little invalid as that small black-and-tan was! His red tongue had a kiss ready for each kind hand and that slender black tail of his always wagged itself joyously when a footstep approached the woodshed.

Old Tom, the darkey, who came every day to see what Mrs. Kearney might want him to do, came along at one time when the children were busy over doggie, and they told him about how they found the little thing, and showed him the bandaged paw.

“Why!” said Tom, taking a better look at the animal, “I’ll wager a cookie dat ere’s de very critter I see down at de station airly dis mawnin’, missy. Same look ’bout him, ’n’ same size. He was racin’ up ’n’ down de platform like he was lookin’ for some one, ’n’ I s’posed, an’ likely every one else did, too, dat his marster was som’eres ’bout, an’ didn’t bother no more ’bout him, ’cause I was busy. Train went off, ’n’ I see de dog once more nosin’ ’round, ’n’ dat’s de las’ I knowed ’bout him.”

“But where *was* his master, Tom?” asked Lassie, and Tom replied:

“Well now, missy, I ’spects dat dog got

sure losted offen dat train what came in an' went out, an' like 's not, his marster 'll be sendin' back fer him — less it mought be dat de critter b'longed to one o' de train hands, an' mebbe, dat bein' so, dey won't care if he *is* lost, fer *leetle* dogs, like dis yer, are moughty troublesome, you see."

"Yes; but, Tom, how do you s'pose he got in the bushes over there, and got his foot hurt?"

"'Spect when he could n't fin' no mars-ter he jes' cut an' run up de road, 'n' some wagin or other run over his paw, 'n' like all animiles do when they 're hurted, he crawled into dem shady bushes troo de fence, an' jes laid down ter wait fer you and Marster Laddie ter fin' him!" replied Tom with a chuckle, as he lifted doggie's foot and examined it.

"Dat ain't much of a hurt," said he. "Ain't no bone bruck, 'n' in a day or two he'll be livelier 'n forty crickets!"

The children were delighted to think that nobody in the village would be apt to claim their new pet, but they were a good deal worried lest whoever lost it from the train should send word back about it—and then, of course, the stage driver would be inquiring along the roads, and—oh, dear! they did not see *how* they could let the dear little doggie go, after they had begun to love him so!

They repeated Tom's account of the dog to Mamma, and she cautioned them not to consider that they had the least claim upon the lost doggie, until a reasonable time for the true owner's claim had passed; and so, for several days, when the little cousins went for Mamma's mail, they entered the post-office in fear and suspense lest Mr. Clark should tell them the dog had been claimed. But up to the end of the fourth day no word of inquiry had been received either at the railroad station or at the office, and Lassie and Laddie

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began to feel more confident about the chance of keeping their dear little dog.

They had spent so much time in the woodshed with doggie that Farmer Jones had passed by with his team a number of times and had not seen his small friends, though he could hear their merry little voices back of the house plainly enough, and he had heard all about the finding of the dog, through Tom.

Mrs. Spencer, too, had wondered why, in four days, her little new friends had not been to see her. And beside all that, the *bed-time stories* had been passed over once or twice, because Lassie and Laddie had preferred that the extra time, allowed usually for the story, should be given to the fondling and petting of their dog, owing to the fear that they would n't have him much longer to enjoy.



CHAPTER XVIII

VARIOUS HAPPENINGS

AT last came the time when Mr. Clark took down the notice of the lost dog, and declared “there was no need for any one to bother about the animal any longer, and that in *his* opinion ‘*findings*,’ after a reasonable time, ‘were *keepings*,’ and the dog ought to belong to those who found and mended it up,” — in which opinion Lassie and Laddie delightedly agreed with him. So Mamma told the children they might now consider it their very own, but if anybody should happen to come along some fine day and *prove* the real ownership, Lassie and Laddie must be willing to let it go.

“ Now there are *three* of us to play together ! ” cried Lassie, and she and Laddie hugged each other and danced around the room in glee, singing, “ Tra-la-la-la ! tra-la-la-la ! We ’ve found a *doggie* ! how happy we *are* ! ”

They named him “ *Bush*, ” as he did n’t seem to answer to any special name when they tried the experiment. “ Bush ” seemed just the right one because he was found in the bushes, and it was quite as agreeable to doggie, no doubt, as any other name would have been.

They soon began to teach him tricks, and a very teachable doggie he proved to be. He learned to walk on his little hind legs across the room from Laddie to Lassie, with a tiny basket held in his mouth (and the appetizing odor of a cookie, of which he was fond, right under his nose) and then sit up in a begging posture till Lassie rewarded him with the cookie he had so honestly carried. He learned to

sit in a chair, dressed in a red jacket and red cap, with a soap-bubble pipe in his mouth, and a piece of newspaper in his paws. He readily learned to jump through Lassie's "hoople," and over a cane which Laddie held, and at last he even learned to go and get into his little basket-bed each evening, when the children's bedtime came, and put his pretty silky head on the pillow Mamma had made for him, and go to sleep "just as though he were a *real child*," as Lassie used to say.

But one day little "Bushie" did something which made the children dance with glee, and caused him to be decorated with all the wild flowers they could cram inside of his collar. And what do you suppose it was? Do you remember about that cross old gobbler which chased Laddie and Lassie one day, and pecked at Laddie's legs? Well, when Bushie had accompanied his little master and mistress on a walk one morning and had frolicked

with them all along the way, they passed the farmyard where that old gobbler lived. For some time the children had not seen him, and had nearly forgotten him, in fact, but on this day the cross old fellow happened to be on hand, and quite in the mood for another chase. Perhaps he did n't see Bush, or if he did he may have thought so dainty a little dog would be sure to be a coward. So he flew over the low stone wall, with a tremendous gobble, and as a matter of course, off ran Laddie and Lassie.

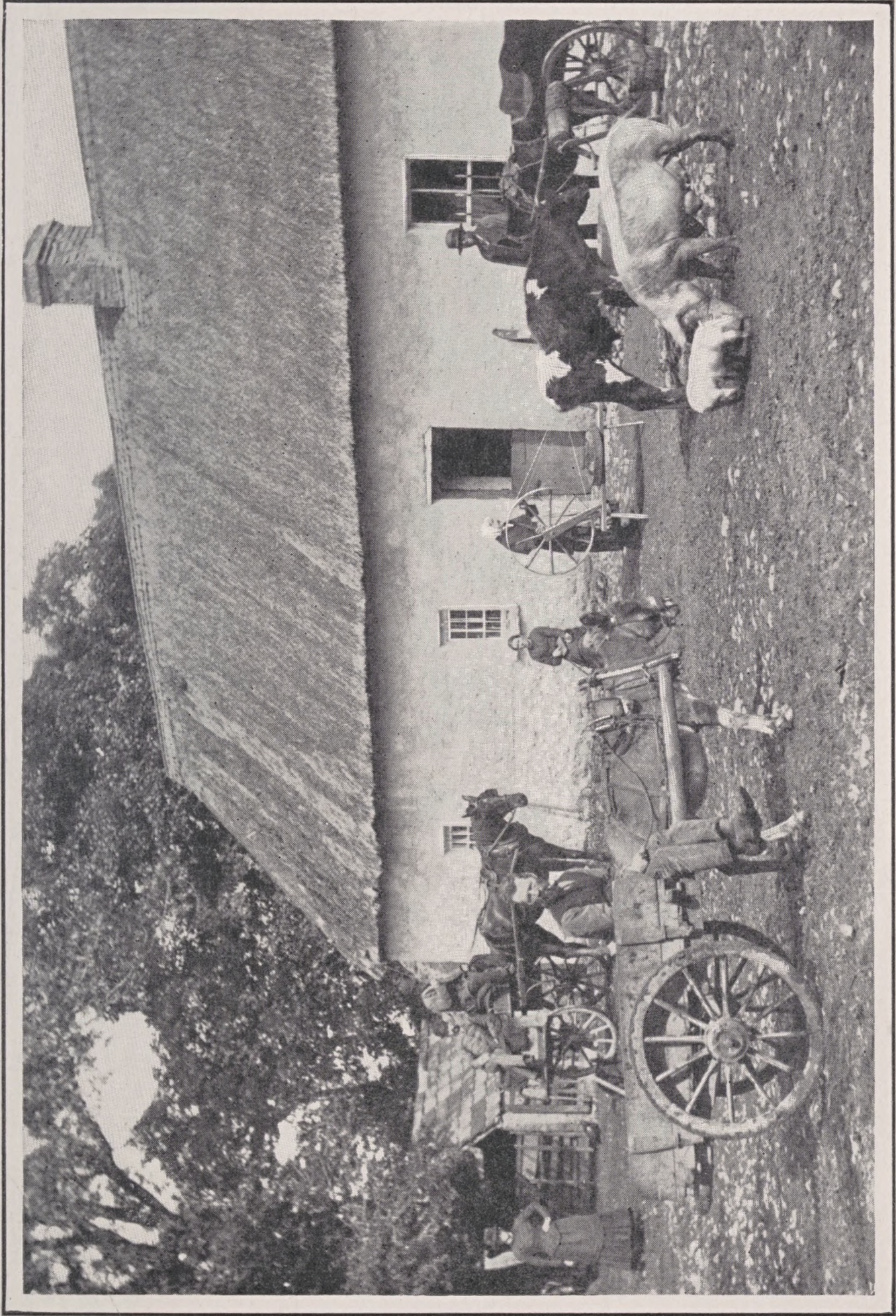
But did Bushie run, too? No, indeed! *He* was no coward, dear little doggie! He made a dash straight at that gobbler, and grabbed him by one flapping wing and whirled and shook him, and, without knowing that he was paying off an old score for his beloved little owners, he had a rough frolic which Mr. Gobbler did n't enjoy, and he was glad enough when Bushie dropped him at last and flew after

the children. Then how they laughed and hopped up and down and petted Bush and gathered flowers for him (which I'm afraid were more of a bother to him than otherwise, as he did n't like the feeling of a garlanded collar, you see); and how they hurried on to tell Mamma all about it! After that they loved their little dog more than ever; and never again did Mr. Gobbler venture to attack anybody, no matter whom, who passed along that way.

When bed-time came that night, Laddie said they were all ready for another picture story, and his Auntie brought forth the welcome envelope. Lassie drew out a photograph of an Irish scene—a little scene in an Irish village.

“Yes, Papa and I were there, dearie,” Mamma replied to the inquiring eyes raised to hers.

“There are sometimes large families all



AN IRISH FARMHOUSE.

crowded together in one family. Grown folks, little folks, piggies big and little, hens and chickens, often geese, too, and plenty of little doggies, all living as closely together as possible, with a good-natured cow, which occupies a shed adjoining the cabin (as the family house is called). Of course all this is only found in the poorer villages amongst the very poor class of people, you see." Laddie shrugged his shoulders, and his Auntie said, "But there are beautiful cities and very fine homes and houses in Ireland, children, and some of the most refined and cultured of people amongst the upper classes; so don't run away with the notion that this picture of a little Irish village is *all* of the beautiful 'Emerald Isle,' as Ireland is called."

Then mamma told her little people more about her journey through that country, and finished her entertainment by reading them a rhyme from the old scrap-book she found so handy. It was a

poem of old date, but that did n't matter to Lassie and Laddie, of course.

A young crossing-sweeper was Tommy McChree;
And once on a miserable, rainy day,
He was busy as ever a boy could be,
Sweeping the crossing on busy Broadway.

Ladies and gentlemen passed him by;
"Move on, little chap," they were apt to reply
When he held out his hand and asked for a penny;
"Get out of the way! I have n't any."

So Tommy kept moving, now up and now down,
Still busily sweeping, and hoping for luck,
Unmindful of many a push and a frown,

For Tommy was gifted with true Irish pluck.
"If it's sorra a taste av a supper I'll get,"
Thought he, "sure 't won't help me a farthing to
fret."

So he swept and he swept till the crossing was
clean

As ever a crossing on Broadway was seen.

Then an omnibus suddenly rattled along,
Splashing poor Tom from his head to his feet;
And out from the window, amid the rude throng
Of people and horses which crowded the street,
There fluttered a scrap. Tommy thought it was
paper;

But, picking it up,—such a jubilant caper
As Tommy then cut! For behold! 't was a bill
Quite large enough Tommy's vest pocket to fill.

A whole dollar bill! Oh! his eyes opened wide
As he turned it, and looked at it over and over;
The heart 'neath his ragged old coat swelled with
pride,

And he thought, "Tom, my boy, *now* you're
rolling in clover."

But there was the omnibus not far ahead:
Tom knew in his heart—to his credit be said—
That though he might *want* every cent of it, still
He was n't the owner of that dollar bill.

So putting temptation quite out of his sight,
He ran just as fast as his short legs would go,
With the coveted bill in his hand hidden tight,
Straight after the 'bus that was going so slow.
Then up on the step in a trice clambered he,
Put his head in the door. "This here money, you
see,
Fell outer the windy,—I *wanted it bad*,
But you see, *'t was n't mine!*" said this brave little
lad.

Well, you may be sure, the bill's owner was found:
And when little Tommy jumped back to the
ground,

That very same bill jumped back with him, too,
And the best of it was—*this* time little Tom knew
The money was his: it had come to him fairly,
And Tom had conducted the business so squarely
That no little sweeper on Broadway could be
More glad and light-hearted than Tommy McChree.

“Who wrote that nice rhyme, Mamma?”
asked Lassie; “I liked it ever so much.”

“Oh, the same ‘M. D. B.,’ whoever she is,” laughed Mamma, “and it was written, you see, before the swift electric cars began sweeping through New York streets, and when the slow omnibuses, and little energetic boys earning pennies at street-crossings, were all the fashion. Midgets like you and Laddie don’t know anything about those days, and that is where ‘*grown-ups*’ have the advantage, you see.” She laughingly put out the lights, and bade the children snuggle down for sleep, and with her loving kisses on their sweet little lips Lassie and Laddie sailed off to Dreamland.



CHAPTER XIX

THE "FRESH-AIRS" AGAIN

LADDIE'S visit was nearing its close by this time, and Lassie began to wonder what she should do without him, when the dreaded day of "good-bye" should arrive.

Laddie's little brow also showed puckerings of anxious thought, as he counted the few days remaining of Lassie's companionship. He was being "pulled"—as he called it—in two ways, you see, for he longed to see his Mamma and Papa quite as much as he wished to stay longer with his dearly loved Auntie and little cousin, and so, when Auntie one morning asked why he was so quiet, and wondered

if his head was aching, he explained that it was n't his *head*, but that his *thoughts* ached, 'cause he had *two kinds of "sorry"* inside of him, and he could n't tell which was the easiest to bear. Auntie guessed very readily the true state of affairs, and smilingly advised the little cousins to put off the grief of parting until the parting came, and reminded them that there were yet some days left them in which to have a good time together, and they would be wise, that very moment, to run out and play in the sunshine, instead of sitting side by side there on the top step of the staircase, wearing such sober little faces that even *Bushie* wondered what was the matter all of a sudden. So they accepted her good advice, and presently were chasing each other merrily around the garden. Suddenly Lassie cried excitedly :

“ Oh, look ! here comes the stage, and it's full of those ‘ Fresh-airs ’ again ! see 'em, Laddie ? ”

The children ran out upon the road, and as the stage passed them, the children within called out to Laddie and Lassie, waving their hands and shouting, "Goo' bye! Goo' bye!"

"You going back to the city?" called Laddie.

"Yes," replied one of the little passengers, "but we don't want to! it's lots nicer here!"

"We've had a jolly time, an' we said three cheers an' tiger-r-r to Mrs. Spencer when we drove away!" called another, while Laddie and Lassie were trotting along the road beside the stage. Suddenly Laddie missed Sammy.

"Hello! where 's Sammy?" he asked.

"Ho! Sam, he 's luckier 'n clovers!" replied one of the boys, as he knelt on the seat and put his head out of the window. "*He* 's no 'Fresh-air' any more, Sam ain't, 'cause that hay-ride man 's gone an' kep' him himself!"

Before Laddie and Lassie could fairly take in the unexpected piece of news, the stage-driver leaned over from his high perch and said :

“Come, come now, you youngsters, quit yer yellin’ an’ scat! I ’ve driv’ slow to obleege ye ’bout ’s long as I ’ve time ter waste.”

Then he flourished his long whip, clucked to his horses, and away went the stage, ricketting, racketting over the road, and a chorus of childish voices trailing “goo’ byes” out upon the air behind it.

Laddie and Lassie turned homeward in a state of wonder and delight.

Could it be really true that dear old Farmer Jones was going to keep Sammy, like the kind man in the rhyme-story? They could hardly wait for a chance to see the kind old man, and ask all about it. They lost all interest in further play about the garden, and ran to tell the dear Mamma the news that “Mrs. Spencer’s

'Fresh-airs' were going home, and that Sammy had stayed behind 'cause Farmer Jones had liked him, and was going to be like the kind man in the rhyme-story."

Of course Mamma was greatly interested, and remembering that Mr. Jones drove by every afternoon to get his mail from the office, she advised the little people to be on the watch for him, and perhaps they would see Sammy also.

So when, in due time, the farm wagon came along, with Farmer Jones and little Sammy seated on top of some bags of grain, and the little "Fresh-air's" mouth stretched wide in grins of delight as he held the reins (and felt as important as a boy of his age usually feels when "bossing" a horse and wagon), Laddie and Lassie shouted and laughed, and climbed up on the grain bags with alacrity, you may be sure.

"You 're just like the man in the rhyme!" screamed Laddie, and at the

same time Lassie's shrill little voice was exclaiming, "It 's all true after all, is n't it! Oh, I 'm so glad!"

To both remarks the farmer laughingly replied: "Wal' now, there ain't a doubt but the rhyme did the thing, Laddie, an' I ain't goin' ter claim a mite o' credit for startin' this here business of holdin' on to Sam. An' Sam, he oughter take off his cap to the woman who writ that there rhyme-story, don't you think so?"

"Hurrah!" yelled Sammy, pulling his ragged cap from his head, and waving it; "hurrah! 'n' three cheers for the rhyme 'n' the kind lady who read it to Laddie and Lassie! Hi! Hi!"

Laddie and Lassie joined in the cheering, and three little tongues and one big tongue wagged and wagged as the wagon rolled over the road, and Sammy held the reins.

"We 're goin' to buy some new clothes, ain't we, Sam boy, when we git to the

store. Can't have *my* boy goin' about lookin' out at the knees 'n' elbows,—a bran' new boy I've jest got, too! So we're goin' to lay in a suit or two, ain't we?"

"We jest *are*!" replied Sam, returning the good old farmer's affectionate glance with a smile of gratitude. "An' I ain't the kind of chap that's goin' ter forgit who's been good to a poor little 'Fresh-air' feller, either!"

"Well, Lassie and I are just as glad as glad can be!" said Laddie, "and I think it's the splendoriest fun I ever heard of! I'm going home soon, and I'll tell my Papa and Mamma all about it, and I'll *never* forget you, Mr. Jones, for being so kind as to take a hint from that rhyme."

"We're 'most at the post-office now," chimed in Lassie, "and I guess we'll keep on and get Mamma's letters, though we did n't s'pose we would stay on this wagon more 'n a minute, did we Laddie?"

“ No, and we have n’t even got anything on our heads ! ” replied Laddie. “ But I don’t care ! we ’ll get our letters all the same, and see Sammy get his new clothes, in the bargain ! Hi ! for Mr. Jones and Sammy ! and hi ! for the rhyme and the ‘ Fresh-air ’ and all ! ”

When at last the post-office was reached, the letters delivered, and the grain bags disposed of, they all went to the store across the way, and in a very few moments little Sammy marched out of the door, feeling proud and happy in a nice suit of gray upon his small body, and a cap to match upon his head. With his hands in his pockets (where the kind old farmer had dropped a few pennies, “ so that sonny should have some *use* of the pockets,” he said), Sammy walked up and down, waiting for Farmer Jones to finish some errands on hand, and enjoying the pleasure with which Lassie and Laddie beheld him in his new attire.

After that the party drove back, and presently the bareheaded little cousins were dropped at their own door, with fresh news for Mamma, and a world of excitement over Sammy's good-fortune in their little hearts.





CHAPTER XX

LADDIE'S "GOOD-BYE DAYS"

"**H**ERE'S a letter from Mamma, Auntie!" called Laddie a day or two later, as he and Lassie ran through the garden to where Mrs. Kearney stood training a vine along the lattice of the little arbor.

"Well, then I suppose you'll be impatient to hear it," she replied, dropping scissors and twine and sitting down beside the children on the rustic bench at hand. Opening the letter she read the wish of the Mamma in the city that her little lad should return to his own home-nest on the following Saturday, and he would find a very impatient and loving Mamma await-

ing him at the depot in New York. The letter contained a great deal more beside, — various matters of interest for Auntie, and so on, — but the children listened to the first part of it only, and their little faces betrayed the thoughts of each small heart. Laddie's "two kinds of sorry," began their work again, and he moved nearer to Lassie. The little girl had but *one* kind of sorrow over the news, and that was so large a kind that it seemed to her she "*could n't* bear it, one single bit!"

But there was no help for it. Laddie must obey his Mamma, as she always obeyed hers, and all they could do meanwhile would be to keep just as near each other and be just as happy and loving as could be, and there were three days left them still for companionship.

"I 'm going straight to say good-bye to Mrs. Spencer," declared Laddie, presently. "Can't I, Auntie?"

"I 'm going, too!" echoed Lassie,

“only *I* don't have to say anything but just ‘How do you do?’ to her.”

“Well, *I* 'm glad of that,” laughed Mamma, “for I should not want to lose my sunbeam Lassie, as well as my sunbeam Laddie, I 'm sure.”

“*Can we go*, Auntie, right away now?” continued Laddie, full of his desire to say good-bye to Mrs. Spencer, and crowd out the disagreeable feeling in regard to leaving Lassie so soon, even though in his little heart, hiding deep down where nobody could guess it, he had a real homesick longing for the clasp of his own Mamma's arms and his dear Papa's strong hug, and was therefore not sorry to go home, though he *was* sorry to leave Lassie.

“Well, run along then, both of you,” said his Auntie, “and don't be gone long, for it is nearing ‘hungry time,’ you know.”

So the little folks started off, and reached Mrs. Spencer's gateway in good time. As they went up the path towards

the piazza a loud voice screamed "Howdy do?"

Nobody was visible, and the children wondered who spoke. "Howdy d-o-o-o?" rang out the voice again, and Lassie whispered:

"I 'spose she's peeking through the window and sees us, but I never knew Mrs. Spencer had such a funny, horrid voice before, did you?"

"I don't 'spose it's Mrs. Spencer at all," replied Laddie, "'cause she *could n't* have such a queer voice! It's only — I guess it's her cook, don't you?"

"Howdy-howdy do-do-do — ha! ha!"

By this time the children had reached the piazza, and the greeting and harsh laughter seemed to come from over their heads.

They looked up, and there was a large gray parrot, swinging by one claw and eyeing the little visitors with curiosity.

"Ho! it's that old parrot!" exclaimed

Laddie. “ I ’ve seen ’em in a bird-store at home, when Mamma and I were out. I ’ve seen monkeys, too, and red and green parrots ’n’ all sorts of birds. But I never heard ’em say ‘ howdy do ’ before.”

Just then Mrs. Spencer appeared, and after greeting the little people, she lifted the cage down, and explained that she had just received Mrs. Polly as a gift from a friend, and found her quite a sociable companion.

“ She sings, and laughs, and cries, and coaxes, and scolds, and whispers — and in fact does so many things that are almost human that sometimes it is hard to realize she is only a gray polly parrot.”

Lassie and Laddie talked to Polly, and presently she descended from her perch, and coming close to the cage bars, lowered her head, lifted her tuft of feathers, and said, in a wheedling tone of voice, “ Scratch Polly’s head ! ”

That made the children laugh, and Las-

sie put her soft little finger through the bars before Mrs. Spencer could warn her not to do so—and, alas! Polly proved treacherous, and giving the little trusting finger a sharp nip, climbed back upon her perch and laughed heartlessly.

The quick tears sprang to Lassie's eyes, for the "nip" had been painful, though fortunately not hard enough to break the tender skin.

Laddie lifted the wounded hand and gallantly kissed it, and Mrs. Spencer speedily wrapped the finger in a healing lotion, while Lassie, ashamed of her tears, winked them laughingly off of her lashes.

"Did you ever hear the rhyme about 'Polly and Jocko'?" asked Mrs. Spencer presently. "It goes this way":

A big green parrot was Polly,
 As green as a parrot could be.
 A frolicksome monkey was Jocko,
 And full of his tricks was he.
 He did n't like Polly, oh, no, not a bit,

And Polly for Jocko cared never a whit;
Each kept a "lookout" when the other was near,
For each of the other was living in fear.
But Jocko one morning stole slyly away
A part of her breakfast from Polly;
He meant it, perhaps, to be only in play,
But Polly didn't think it so jolly,
So all of a sudden she caught Jocko's tail,
And the pinch of her bill made the poor fellow wail.
But while she was laughing, he up with his paw
And gave her a hurricane right on her jaw
Which tumbled her over, and had she worn *teeth*
A *toothache* I'm sure she'd have had.
But she climb'd to her perch, and in language her
own,
Complained that her *headache* was bad.
After that, Mrs. Polly and Jocko, you see,
Found by *keeping apart* they could better agree.

"Now, I think this little finger is quite well again," continued Mrs. Spencer, "and there's a basket of fruit in the sitting-room I'm sure you will both enjoy. Come in, dear children."

While they were enjoying the fruit, Laddie stated his errand to Mrs. Spencer,

and she felt sorry to learn that he was to leave so soon. They had a nice little talk together, and then it was time for the walk home.

Mrs. Spencer took Laddie very close in her arms as she kissed him good-bye, and took a long look at the sweet boyish face, and the brown eyes so like those of the little son whom she had given back to God.

"Good-bye, my bonny Laddie," she said; "don't forget me, dear, and when you come again, be sure and let me know it right away."

Then she kissed Lassie lovingly, and said she hoped the little girl would remember that there would always be a welcome for her at the Spencer cottage; and at last the children were wending their way homeward. When they were telling about their visit to Mrs. Spencer later on, and Laddie said he wished he had something very, very nice that he could give his

friend for a good-bye gift, his Auntie had a sudden thought pop into her head.

“ I have a plan, Laddie,” she said; “ I’m wondering whether it is a good one ! ”

The children were ready for it, no matter what it might be, for, as Lassie exclaimed, “ Mamma’s plans are always the very bestest and nicest in the world ! ” so they were sure this new one would prove no exception.

“ Well ! how would you like to have a nice little photograph taken, Laddie, and give it to Mrs. Spencer ? Think she would like that ? ”

Laddie jumped at the idea, but considered the plan would not be *quite* perfect unless his dear Lassie’s picture was taken with his own.

“ She loves Lassie, too, you see, Auntie,” he said, “ and we ’ve always been together at her house, and I ’m sure ’s sure can be that she ’ll want a photograph of us both together.”

Auntie quite agreed with him, and Lassie was more than delighted. The idea had proven — like all others her Mamma had thought of — just "the bestest in the world!" and it was decided that the pictures must be taken that very afternoon.

"Shall we wear our Sunday clothes, dearie Mamma?" asked Lassie. But Mamma thought Mrs. Spencer would be better pleased if she could have the little people before her always in their usual "every-day dress," — Lassie with her shade hat on (or off, it did n't matter which) and Laddie with his little Scotch cap perched back on his curly brown head, and no attempt at any "dress-up for the occasion."

So right after luncheon Mamma Kearney and her two little folks started for the village, and when they returned the afternoon was well over, and the errand had been satisfactorily accomplished.

Little Bushie — whom we have been

neglecting in our story for awhile, but who has been holding his own place, just as usual, in the affairs of his family—came racing up from the meadow, where he had been having some fun with the squirrels in the grove of trees, and cuddling down beside Laddie, laid his smooth head against the little lad's knee.

“Now here's another thing,” said Laddie, “that makes me have such a *sorrowness* 'bout leaving this lovely place. Lassie owns Bushie same 's *I* do, and she don't want him to go 'way, and I don't want him *not* to go 'way, and—and—say, Auntie,”—he got up, and with a wistful glance at Lassie, went over and whispered in Auntie's ear.

Alas! his whisper was too loud, in its eagerness to be a secret, and Lassie heard him ask her mother “if she would please coax Lassie to give him *her half* of Bushie.”

Lassie's heart gave a jump. Part with

her half of the dear, beautiful doggie? Let Bushie go home with Laddie? Oh, no, she could n't do it—never! never!

But before she could run across the room to Mamma's side, where Laddie still stood, her heart relented, and she knew that she loved her darling Laddie most of everything on earth next to Mamma! oh, a hundred thousand times more than she loved Bushie, who was only a dog, after all! So she exclaimed bravely:

"I heard every single thing you whispered to Mamma, Laddie Lee! and so you need n't think you 're having the least mite of a secret from me—aha! aha!"

Laddie looked surprised, and had n't a word to say, but Lassie ran and threw her arms about him.

"*Course* you can have my half of Bushie!" she exclaimed, "for even if I do love him so, I love *you* Laddie, best of anything in the world next to Mamma—

and so I 'll give you Bushie all for your very own, there now ! ”

Laddie returned Lassie's hug, but felt that he ought to be as generous as she had been, and therefore, though he wanted Bushie very much, he repented of his whispered request to Auntie, and replied :

“ No ! I 'm sorry I began to be selfish, and I shall give *you my* half of him, Lassie ; and you won't let him forget 'bout me, will you ? ”

Just as the little girl began to protest against that, Auntie interrupted with the suggestion that Laddie's Mamma might have something to say about the matter, and Laddie would better wait till he received permission from her to have a dog.

“ Sure enough ! I forgot all about that,” said Laddie ; “ but even if she says ‘ yes ’ when I ask her, I 'm not going to be a selfish boy any more 'n *Lassie* was n't going to be selfish.”

“ Very well, then, we 'll let the matter

stand; and after you find out how Mamma feels about it, dear, you can let me know, and we will see how we can divide Bushie between you," said his Auntie laughing.

The children laughed, too. "Give me his *tail*, Auntie, 'cause I like to see it wag," cried Laddie. "And give me his *head*, Mamma, 'cause I like to see his lovely eyes," added Lassie; and Bushie, knowing that some fun was going on, barked joyously and capered about both his little owners.





CHAPTER XXI

ABOUT A SCENE IN NAPLES

“OH dear! Oh dear!” sighed Lassie, as she opened her eyes on the morning of Laddie’s “good-bye day.” “Oh dear me! Laddie’s going away to-day, and it’s going to be dreadful as can be for a little girl like me!”

“Why, Lassie!” exclaimed Mamma, “were n’t you quite a happy little girl with Mamma before your birthday present came? You’re not very complimentary to Mamma, are you?”

Lassie’s little arms went up and around the neck of the dear mother who had just awakened her with a morning kiss.

“O Mamma, you know I should

surely die right off if I were to lose *you!* I s'pose I did n't mean quite all I said 'bout Laddie's going away, but—but he's such a dear boy to have around, is n't he? And he's going to be lonely, too. Are n't you sorry for him?"

Mamma laughed. "Yes, very sorry, dearie, and so we must cheer up and make things bright and lively for a poor little Laddie who is going to such a sad place as his own home, where his own Mamma and Papa love him so and are waiting to see him."

Lassie looked up quickly. "Oh, you're just making fun of me, Mamma!" she said; "your eyes are full of twinklings." She laughed with her mother, and was out of bed in a minute, dressing as fast as possible.

"Where's Laddie now?" she asked.

"Busily packing his small dress-suit case, and feeling so important over it that he won't let me help him. Come now,

dear; it is breakfast-time, and you must be quite ready in five minutes." She went to Laddie's room and told him the same thing, then she went down-stairs, wiping a tear or two from her eyes, for she felt as sorry as Lassie was feeling over the departure of the little nephew so dear to her. He was to leave in the afternoon by the stage which passed the cottage at two o'clock.

Presently the little people appeared, and in Laddie's hand was the envelope which had contained the bed-time story photographs.

"See, Auntie!" he exclaimed. "I found it on the floor by your table. I guess the wind blew it off. But it's got just one more picture in it; see?"

"And you can tell me about it to-night, you know, can't you, Mamma?" asked Lassie. "Only it won't sound so good to listen to with no Laddie to hear it with me."

“Why need we wait for bed-time, Lassie?” questioned Mamma. “Laddie shall listen with you to this last picture, which is the ‘good-bye’ picture of the bunch; and I’ll tell you about it after breakfast.” That was good news for the children, and they finished their meal in short order.

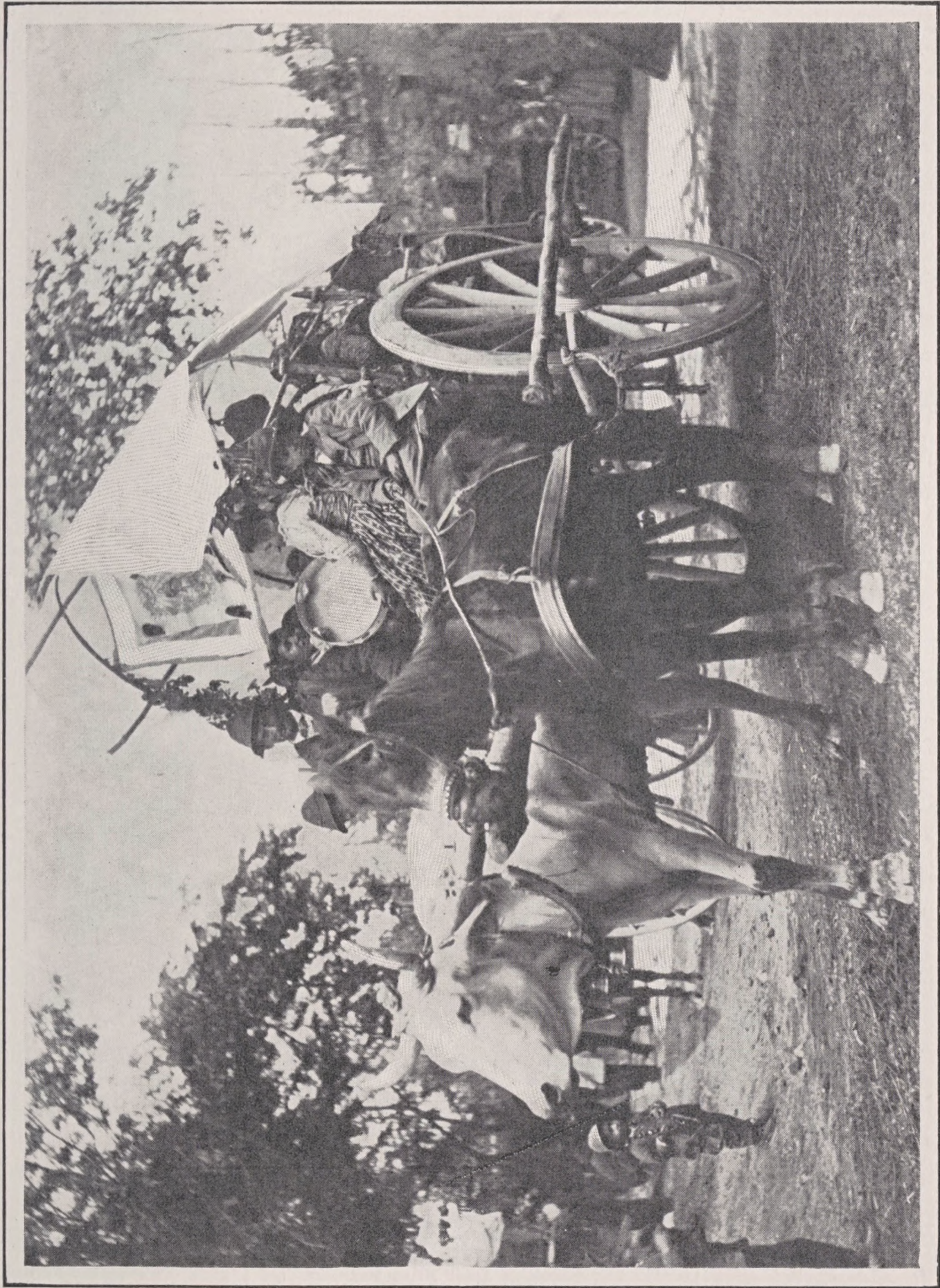
“Now then, Auntie dear,” cried Laddie, “here’s a comfor’ble chair right on the porch all ready for the kind lady who’s going to tell us a story ’bout this funny picture. Come, *please* hurry a little bit!”

The picture showed a cart drawn by an ox and a horse. The cart seemed full to overflowing with children, and one or two men and women, and the scene was a street in Naples, Italy.

“I never saw a cow and horse pulling together at a wagon like this picture,” said Lassie; and Laddie added that he would n’t *want* to see it, either, “it looked so mixed up.”

Mamma laughed. “That ‘mixed up’

state of affairs is pretty common in Naples," she said; "and I bought this picture on the day I happened to see just this very thing." She seated herself in the chair provided for her by Laddie, and continued: "It was a sort of festival day in one of the outside quarters of the city, and this cart—or one like it (for *this* picture was, I suppose, taken on a past similar occasion)—was filled with children who were carrying musical instruments of various kinds, and were kept in order by one or two older ones, one of whom was driving the odd team such as you see here. But that was not the only time I saw such a comical sight, for whenever I took a walk, or a drive, I was sure to meet a cart of some kind drawn by either a cow and a horse, or an ox and a horse, like this, and very often a little bit of a donkey and an enormous big horse which could almost have carried little donkey on its back. Once I saw a still funnier sight,



and that was a little cow—a dear little brown one that you and Lassie could have played with—and right along side of it was a *woman*—a strong woman, who could almost have pulled the cart alone. But she was helping her little cow by pulling on a rope attached to the cart, and with her red shoulder shawl, her short red skirt, and her black hair flying all about her head, she made a queer picture—she, her cow, and her cart, which carried a pile of cabbages—I can assure you. Another comical thing I saw while there—and you'll laugh when I tell you what it was. The Italians are very superstitious—that is a certain class of them are. They believe in evil spirits and all such funny notions as 'evil eyes,' and ill fortune and good fortune depending upon certain foolish little rites, such as you'll understand better when you're older. Well, I saw a number of horses, donkeys, and even cows, coming along the streets,

either drawing carts, or bearing in large baskets, fastened at each side of their saddles, and called '*Panniers*,' sundry burdens of great weight ; or often carrying only a man or woman in the saddle. But upon each animal there appeared a bunch or tuft of hair, or fur, which stuck up straight as an arrow, and looked funny enough as the animal waddled along. Such sights would appear very strange here, would n't they, in our country ? But after all, our ways, no doubt, seem as odd and queer to foreigners as their ways do to us sometimes. There, now, my story is finished, and you two midgets would better run away and play, and enjoy your last frolic together before lunch-time."





CHAPTER XXII

“GOOD-BYE !”

I N a very few moments the old stage would come rumbling along, for it was very near two o'clock now, and the luncheon hour was long past. Lassie and Lad-die were sitting as closely together as possible on the top step of the porch under the vines. Their small hands were clasped, and their sweet little faces were very sober in expression. In the hall behind them the old clock was ticking its seconds and minutes away as fast as its pendulum would wag back and forth, and Lassie wished it would all of a sudden *stop*, for every tick seemed to spell out the mournful sentence—“Lad-die's-going-

off-to-day!" Waiting beside the gate, all strapped and tagged, was Laddie's little dress-suit case, and Bushie sat near, keeping a watchful and rather mournful guard over it, for I think he had strong suspicions that something very unpleasant was about to happen.

Presently, Auntie came from the dining-room with a pretty straw lunch-basket nicely filled for Laddie's "hungry time" on the cars. She laid her hand caressingly on the curly head of her dear little nephew, and said, "I want you to tell Mamma that you've been a great big comfort to Lassie and Auntie, darling, and the best little visitor in the world. Tell her you have kept your promise to be 'extra good,' and here's a kiss to carry safely to Mamma."

Just as Laddie received the precious gift for his mother, his quick ears caught the sound of the rumble of wheels.

"Oh, here comes that old stage!" he

cried, while Lassie jumped up excitedly and held her little cousin's arm tightly.

“ It comes so soon,” she complained; “ we have n't half had time to say good-bye! Oh dear!”

But the stage was now at the door, and the driver was calling out, “ Hi, there! all ready?” And the next minute the small dress-suit case was lifted to the top of the coach, and little Laddie was receiving his good-bye hugs and kisses from Lassie and Auntie, before the bony old stage nags whirled him out of sight.

Of course there were some tears to be winked out of both the brown and the blue pairs of eyes as the distance between Lassie at the cottage gate and Laddie on the leather-covered seat of the old depot stage widened more and more. But when the little boy began to look *forward*, and not backward any longer, and pictured the glad meeting so soon to take place between his own sweet Mamma and his

loving Papa the tears disappeared from his eyes and a little dimple grew in his rosy cheek.

He could feel already, in imagination, the warm clasp and loving kiss of his mother, when the train would reach the Grand Central Depot in New York, and the conductor would see him safely out on the platform where Mamma and Papa would be waiting for him. He could feel, also, the pressure of his father's arm, and could hear the merrry "Hello ! here's our little man again !" which was Papa's way of greeting him after any little absence. So Laddie "cheered up" very rapidly and on rolled the stage towards his own dear home again.

Meanwhile our little Lassie had succeeded in swallowing the lumps in her throat and Mamma had kissed away the tear diamonds which had sparkled on the lashes of her blue eyes, and now she was sitting beside Bushie, petting the little

doggie both for Laddie and for herself. “ We ’re going to miss him lots and lots, Bushie dear,” she said, “ but when *I* am the birthday present for *him* in one more year, jus’ as likely as not Auntie will let me take you with me (if Mamma is willing) and we ’ll have such fun at Laddie’s house, you ’ll see if we don’t ! ”

So now my story is done, and unless something should prevent, I can tell you sometime a little more about our Lassie and Laddie, and how Lassie’s visit to New York turned out.



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